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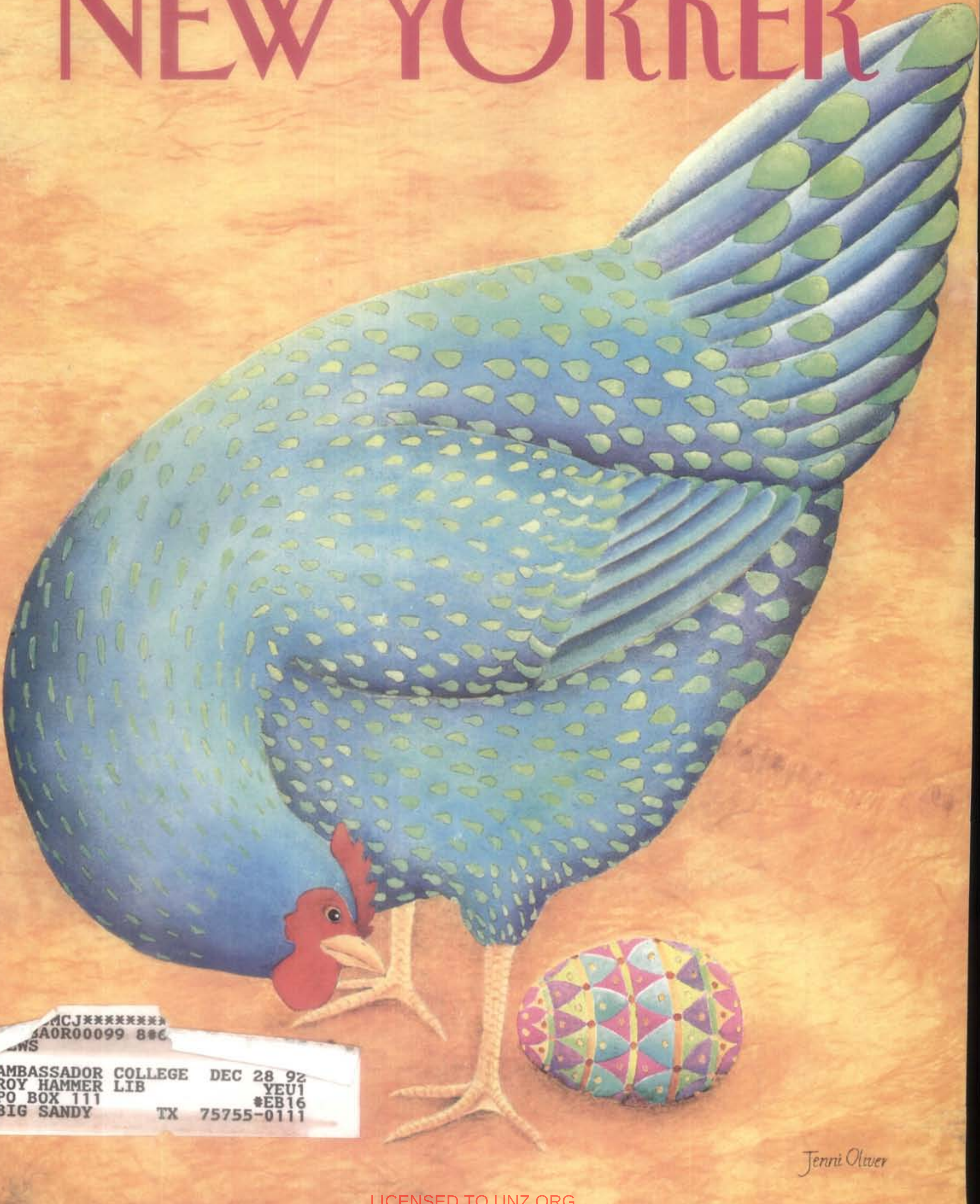

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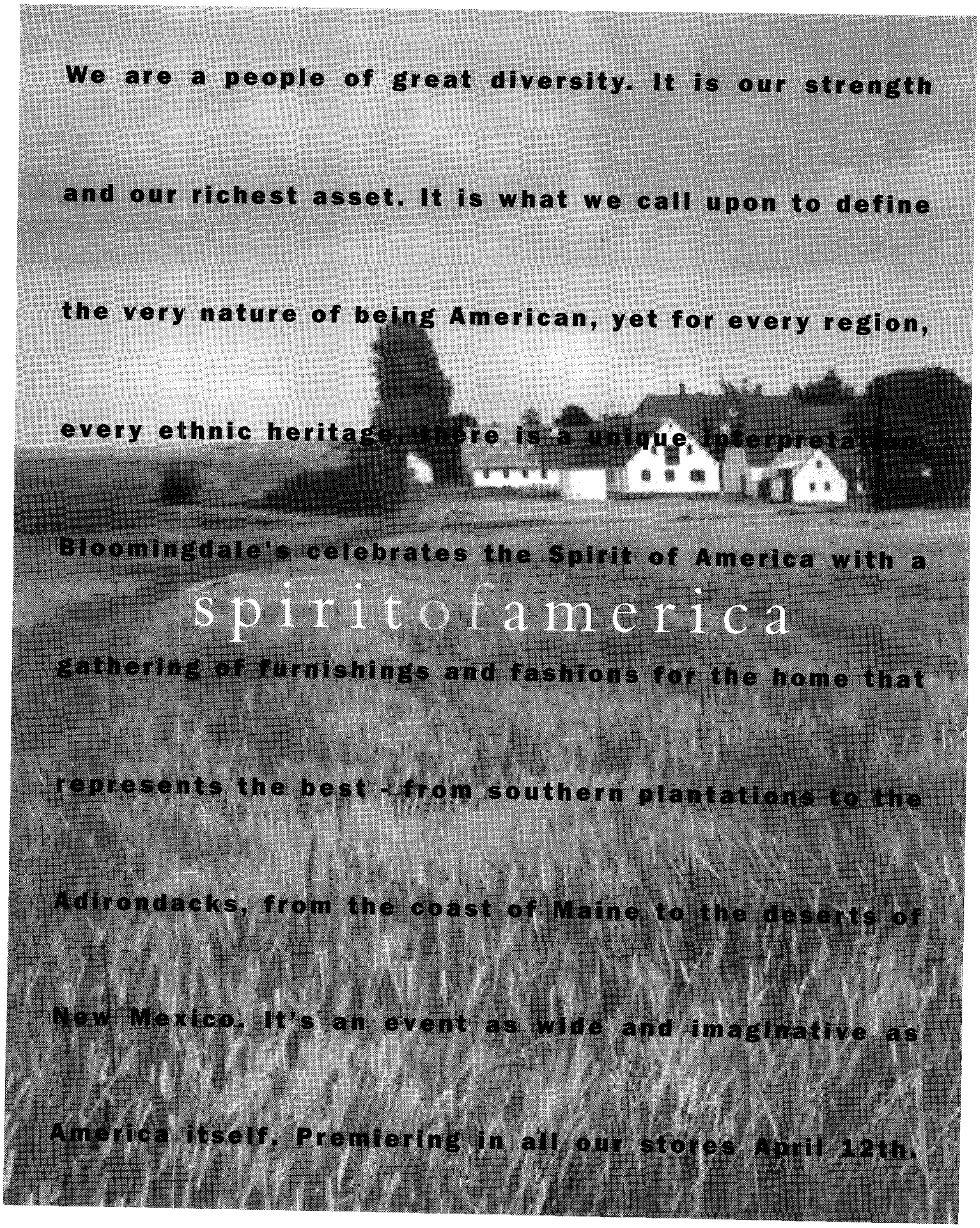

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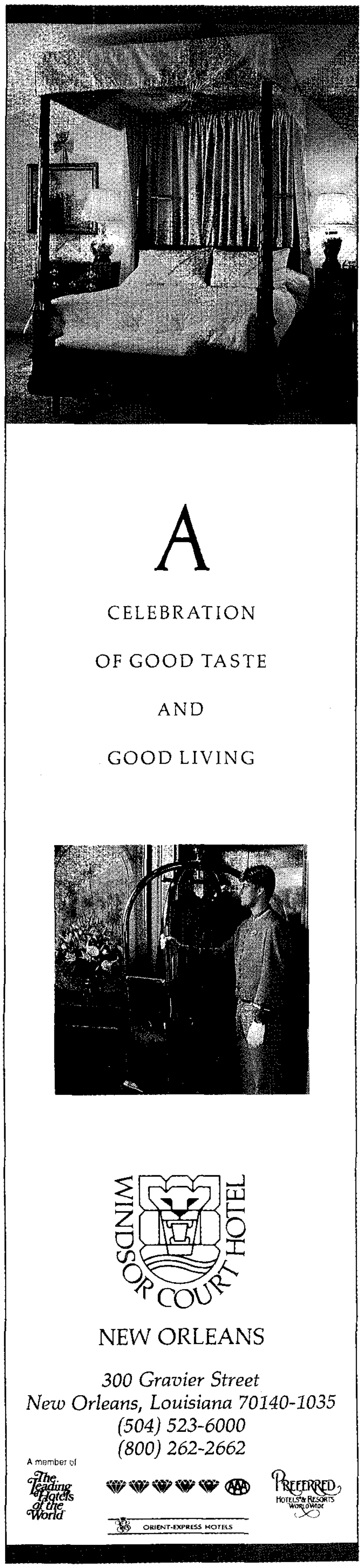

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

J. Greg De Felice and the company of "Gunmetal Blues," the new Chandleresque musical that AMAS is producing at Theatre Off Park, would like the N.Y.P.D. to know that there are no hard feelings. Recently, Mr. De Felice, the production manager of the show, emerged from a 42nd Street knickknack shop where he had gone to procure a holster, and found himself set upon by seven or eight of New York's finest. In truth, Mr. De Felice, who is as nonviolent as the next man, had purchased the holster as a prop; but the cops, who like to keep an eye on things when it comes to firearms, were hard put to believe this.

Since then, Mr. De Felice has been dining out on the story a lot. We heard it when we dropped in at Theatre Off Park to see what our friends at AMAS, Rosetta LeNoire and Bill Maher, were up to. We have to say, we were pretty impressed. We found "Gunmetal Blues" at once so intelligent and so uplifting that we don't know whether to peg it as the intellectual blockbuster of the season or the feel-good hit of the nineties. Certainly, it's the best small-scale musical we've seen in a long time. A poignant exploration of the subtext of the hard-boiled mystery genre (a sort of thinking man's "City of Angels"), it has a Private Eye (Scott Wentworth), a Piano Player (Daniel Marcus), and an assortment of Blondes (all played by Marion Adler, who also wrote the show's brilliantly clever lyrics). It also has a beautiful Hopperesque set (designed by Eduardo Sicangco), a score (by Craig Bohmler) that couldn't be more captivating or sophisticated, and a knowing yet wistful book (by Mr. Wentworth) with more twists than a Chandler simile. And, unlike the frenzied, forgettable plots of most Chandler novels, it has a dénouement that stays with you—the gags all add up to something.

Incidentally, Mr. De Felice stuck to his story. He got away, finally, none the worse for his brush with the law—although he did get a shave and a haircut. And, as we've said, there are no hard feelings. In fact, Mr. De Felice assures us that should the officers in question have any wish to see "Gunmetal Blues," the staff at Theatre Off Park will be happy to comp them.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22			

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Candide—An adaptation by Len Jenkin of the Voltaire classic. Previews through April 21. Opens April 22 at 7. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

Edyta Gorniak in "Metro"

Falsettos—A musical conceived by William Finn and James Lapine which combines their earlier works "March of the Falsettos" and "Falsettoland." With Michael Rupert, Stephen Bogardus, and Chip Zien. In previews. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Groundhog—A play, with music, by Elizabeth Swados. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

Guys and Dolls—Jerry Zaks has directed this new production of the 1950 musical by Frank Loesser (score and lyrics) and Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows (book). (It was based on a Damon Runyon story.) Peter Gallagher, Nathan Lane, Josie de Guzman, and Faith Prince head a forty-member company. Preview on April 13. Opens April 14 at 6:30. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Gypsy Passion—Fifteen Spanish dancers, singers, and musicians in a flamenco revue. Preview on April 21. Opens April 22 at 8, and will run through May 2. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824.)

The High Rollers Social and Pleasure Club—A musical featuring Allen Toussaint, set in a New Orleans sporting club. Previews through April 20. Opens April 21 at 6:45. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Jelly's Last Jam—Gregory Hines has the lead in a new musical about Jelly Roll Morton. George C. Wolfe directed and wrote the book. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

The Lunatic, the Lover, and the Poet—Brian Bedford, seen here last winter in Richard Nelson's "Two Shakespearean Actors," presents a reprise of his one-man show about Shakespeare. Preview on April 21. Opens April 22 at 8. (Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Man of La Mancha—A twenty-fifth-anniversary production of the musical, starring Raul Julia and Sheena Easton. In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Metro—A musical import from Warsaw, which features a cast of forty-one dancers and singers. Janusz Stoklosa composed the score. Mary Bracken Phillips has provided English-language lyrics and book (in collaboration with Janusz Jozefowicz) for this production. Previews April 14-15. Opens April 16 at 6:15. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

One of the All-Time Greats—A black comedy by the actor Charles Grodin. Previews April 14-15. Opens April 16 at 8. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

Shimada—The American première of a 1987 drama by the Australian playwright Jill Shearer. Ben Gazzara, Ellen Burstyn, Mako, and Estelle Parsons are among the cast members. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

A Small Family Business—The American première of a play by Alan Ayckbourn. The cast includes Brian Murray, Caroline Lagerfelt, Jane Carr, and Anthony Heald. Lynne Meadow directed. In previews. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Two Trains Running—August Wilson's new play, directed by Lloyd Richards. Larry Fishburne and Roscoe Lee Browne lead the cast. Opens April 13 at 6. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

NEW THIS SEASON

The Acting Company—Presenting Athol Fugard's **blood knot**, directed by Tazewell Thompson. (John Jay Theatre, 899 Tenth Ave., at 58th St. 279-4200. Closes April 15.)

Beau Jest—A comedy by James Sherman. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

The Bells; or, the Polish Jew—Everett Quinton has adapted an adaptation of a hundred-and-twenty-year-old "dramatic study." He also plays all the roles. Eureka directed. (Charles Ludlam, 1 Sheridan Sq. 691-2271.)

Bernie's Bar Mitzvah—Written and directed by Howard Perloff, this you-are-part-of-the-show show includes an array of food (complete with a Viennese table) in the ticket price. Ian Bonds plays Bernie. (24 Karat Club, 327 W. 44th St. For information about tickets, call 1-800 231-8607.)

The Best of Forbidden Broadway—A tenth-anniversary edition of Gerard Alessandrini's show, featuring both past highlights and new material. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Catskills on Broadway—A festival of ethnicity and all but unbroken laughter. Freddie Roman and Mal Z. Lawrence are the Jewish comedians; Dick Capri handles the Italians. The jokes explode around us, and there isn't a dud in the lot. Marilyn Michaels, the fourth member of the company, does imitations of imitations. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/23/91.) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Chekhov Very Funny—The Pearl Theatre Company winds up its season with four short comedies by Chekhov. (125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708. Closes May 2.)

Conversations with My Father—If you're looking for a totally satisfying theatrical experience, try the new Herb Gardner, a bittersweet memory play about a Lower East Side barkeep, his two sons, and the patrons of his tavern. As staged by Daniel Sullivan, with an ace cast led by the wonderful Judd Hirsch, the play does what "Jake's Women" and "Dancing at Lughnasa" would probably do if their authors were, respectively, more sophisticated and less sentimental. Grab this one. (4/13/92) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

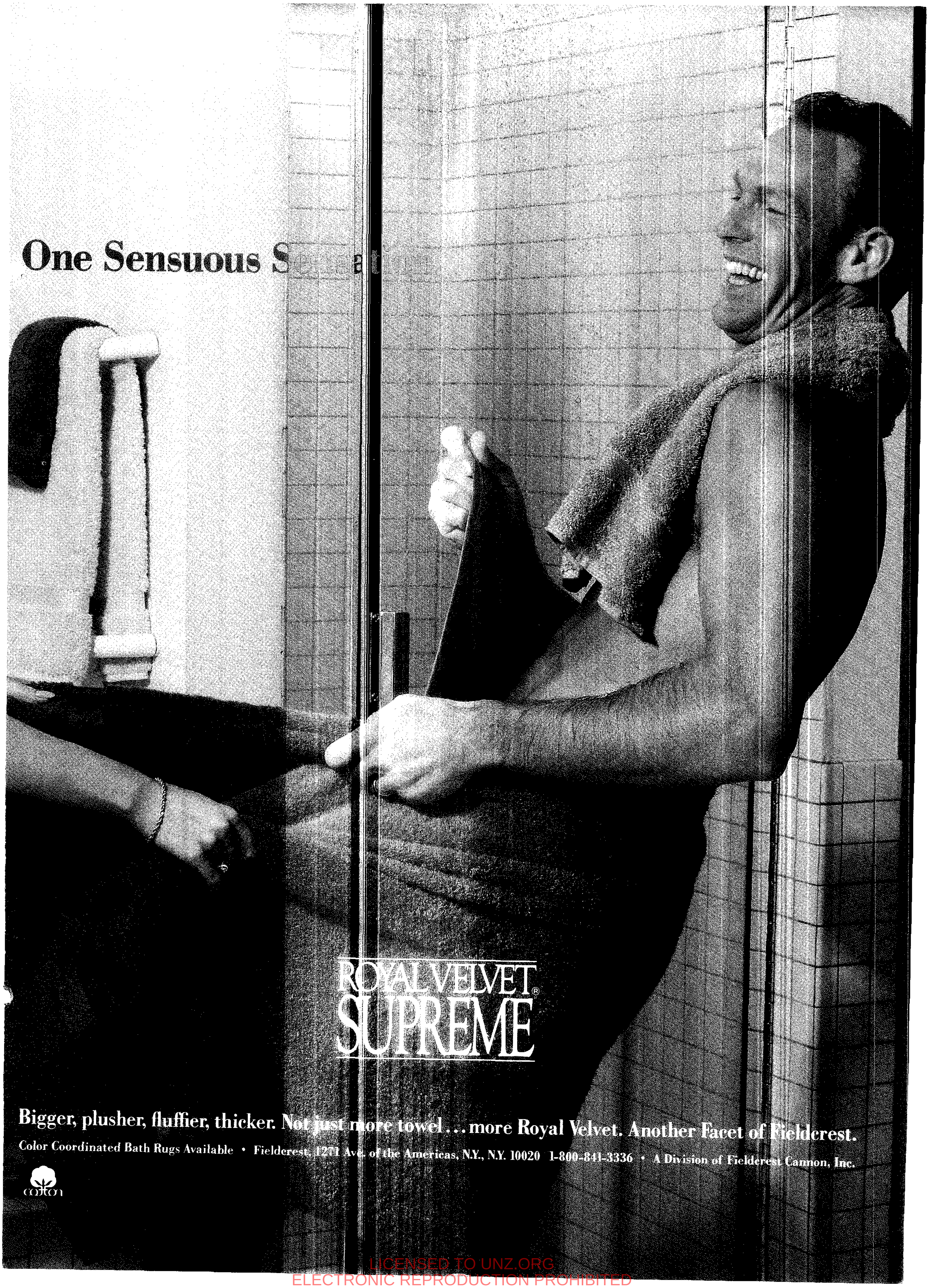
Crazy for You—Lightly based on "Girl Crazy," which opened in 1930, this glorious show is actually a celebration of the music of George Gershwin and the lyrics of his brother Ira—nineteen songs in all—and also of the witty, imaginative choreography of Susan Stroman. Ken Ludwig wrote the lively book. Harry Groener and Jodi Benson are the lead actor/dancers. The scenery is by Robin Wagner; the costumes are by William Ivey Long; and the masterly direction is by Mike Ockrent. Bless 'em all. (3/2/92) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Dancing at Lughnasa—How you respond to Brian Friel's wistful autobiographical play depends a good deal on your personality and preoccupations. Either you will find it lovely and lyrical or it will strike you as the memory play from Hell. (11/4/91) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Death and the Maiden—Mike Nichols' Americanized version of Ariel Dorfman's play (in which Juliet Stevenson took London by storm last year) is a sad disappointment. The play, which is set in "a country that is probably Chile" and concerns a woman's attempt to punish the man she holds responsible for torturing her in captivity fifteen years before, is anything but subtle, and Glenn Close, Richard Dreyfuss, and Gene Hackman are all grossly miscast. (3/30/92) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

The End of the Day—A new play by Jon Robin Baitz, the author of "The Substance of Fire." (Reviewed in this issue.) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Five Guys Named Moe—Six singers and dancers—Jerry Dixon, Doug Eskew, Milton Craig Nealy, Kevin Ramsey, Jeffrey D. Sams, and Glenn Turner—star in a celebration of the music of Louis Jordan. (Reviewed in this



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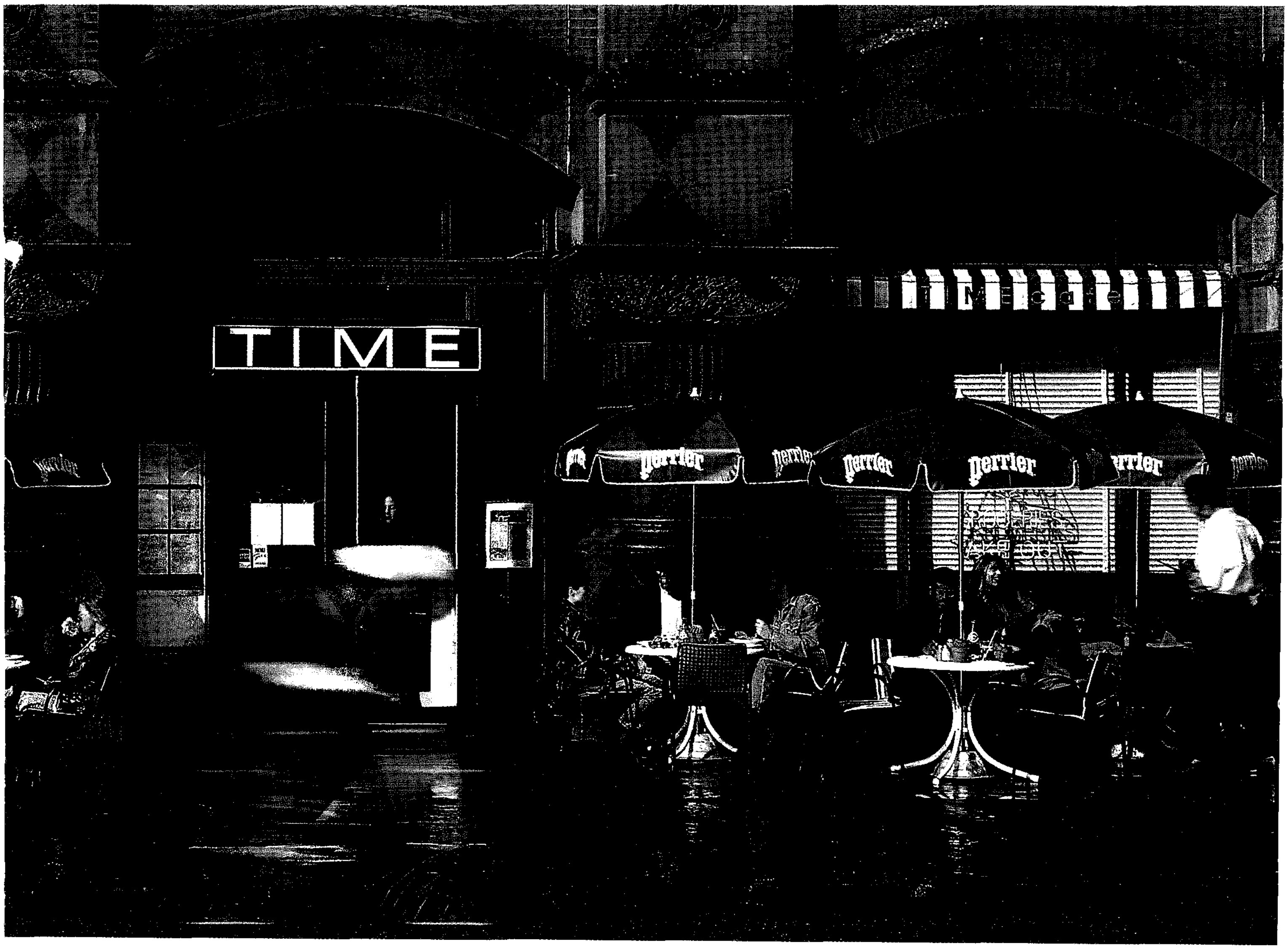
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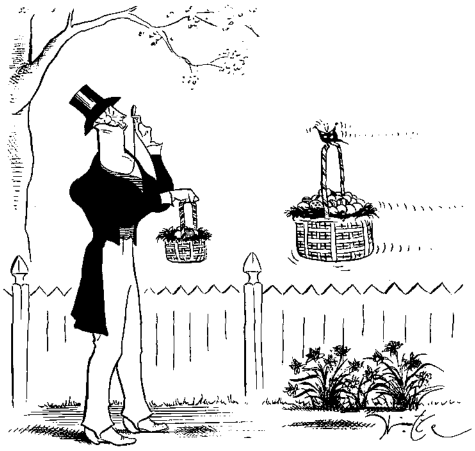
issue.) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Four Baboons Adoring the Sun—John Guare's play about a man and wife who invite the children of their former marriages to join them at an archeological dig in Sicily may have its flaws, but dullness is not one of them. Stockard Channing and James Naughton are fine in the leading roles (and so is everyone else aboard). Tony Walton's settings, as lighted by Richard Pilbrow, are truly marvellous and the action is lively, from beginning to end. Peter Hall directed. (3/30/92) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes April 19.)

From the Mississippi Delta—In eleven scenes, Endesha Ida Mae Holland dramatizes her own rise (and journey) from the Delta (where she had been a teen-age prostitute) to the University of Minnesota and triumph in academia. The leading character, though, is her mother, a midwife called Aint Baby, who is very well portrayed by Cheryl Lynn Bruce. The role of the author is split between Ms. Bruce, Sybil Walker, and Jacqueline Williams, and the result is a lively and merry evening. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

Grandchild of Kings—Harold Prince's enthralling adaptation of the first two volumes of Sean O'Casey's memoirs is set—beautifully—by Eugene Lee in a square in Dublin. The performances, all of them satisfying, are by the members of the Irish Repertory Theatre Company; Padraic Moyles, Patrick Fitzgerald, and Chris O'Neill are Sean as child, young man, and old man, and the invaluable Pauline Flanagan is Sean's mother. Traditional Irish songs and dances accompany the action every inch of the way. (2/24/92) (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 477-7900.)



Gunmetal Blues—A musical mystery by Scott Wentworth (book), Craig Bohmler (score), and Marion Adler (lyrics). Presented by AMAS Musical Theatre. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl. 279-4200.)

Hamlet—Stephen Lang is more antic than melancholy Dane in this looselimbed, harmless production. There are good performances by Elizbaeth McGovern as Ophelia and James Cromwell as Polonius. (4/13/92) (Criterion Center, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Jake's Women—Alan Alda is at his genial best in the new Neil Simon. The play, about an aging writer trying to come to terms with the women in his life, past and present, is pretty much what you'd expect: some funny lines and a lot of phony dialogue. It's predictable, banal, and contrived, but at least it showcases a fine cast of actresses that includes Kate Burton, Helen Shaver, and Joyce Van Patten. (4/6/92) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Julie Halston's Lifetime of Comedy—For up-to-the-minute coverage of what it is like to be "divorced, over thirty, hormonally imbalanced," you can't do better than the wit and wisdom of this multitalented actress-comedienne-sage. She's a little like Joan Rivers, a little like Joan Collins, and a little like St. Joan. Also a little like ZaSu Pitts. Among our favorite moments in this autobiographical show are the story of events leading up to Miss Halston's tragic divorce, the visit to the breast doctor, and the ritual reading and textual analysis of the *Times* wedding announcements. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226.)

The Lady from Havana—An encore presentation of a play by Luis Santeiro about a Cuban family in Miami. Three performances a week are in English; three are in Spanish. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 869-3530.)

Lotto (Experience the Dream)—Cliff Roquemore's comedy about a Los Angeles family who wins the lottery. (Heckscher, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 369-6500.)

Lypsinka! A Day in the Life—A new show written and performed by John Epperson. Presented by New York Theatre Workshop. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 302-6989. Closes April 19.)

Marvin's Room—A play about dying, suffering, and sacrifice in one family, written in a style so frisky as to set the teeth permanently on edge. There is a fine performance by Mark Rosenthal as a smoldering young man. Also with Alice Drummond, Laura Esterman, and Tim Monsion. Scott McPherson is the dramatist, David Petrarca the director. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

The Master Builder—An aimless revival of Ibsen's noble play. (4/6/92) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Closes April 26.)

The Most Happy Fella—This is one musical we think the world could be without and feel no sorrow. The story of a girl forced to content herself with some old duffer because some other old duffer wanted to teach everyone a lesson about making do with what life has to offer, it's pseudo opera superimposed on pseudo Americana. As for Gerald Gutierrez's Goodspeed Opera production, it's your basic slightly-better-than-average dinner-theatre revival. What's the rumpus? (2/24/92) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Opal—A new musical by Robert Nassif Lindsey, presented by the Lamb's Theatre Company. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

The Oxcart—The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary with a revival of Rene Marqués's drama, which was the company's first production. Three performances a week are in English; four are in Spanish. (304 W. 47th St. 354-1293. Closes April 26.)

Red Diaper Baby—A one-man comedy written and performed by Josh Kornbluth and directed by Joshua Mostel. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103. Closes April 26.)

Return to the Forbidden Planet—This light-minded entertainment is a patchwork of beloved pop songs stitched together with Shakespeareana. The show, however, has almost nothing to do with the cult movie it is based on, and still less to do with "The Tempest." Written and directed by Bob Carlton, it is more than anything else an occasion to laugh a bit and rock out a lot. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Shmulnik's Waltz—Allan Knee's comedy, with music by David Shire. Seen earlier this season at the Jewish Rep. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 967-9077.)

Sight Unseen—Donald Margulies' engrossing new play, which is about an Eric Fischl-type painter who decides to look up an old girlfriend he once treated badly, takes the contemporary art scene to task. Technically, it also plays around with time a good deal, though never sloppily or gratuitously. You end up being affected by a curious kind of resonance—it's earned, not something you've brought with you into the theatre. (2/3/92) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)

A Streetcar Named Desire—A revival of Tennessee Williams' classic 1947 play. Jessica Lange is Blanche, Alec Baldwin is Stanley, Amy Madigan is Stella, and Timothy Carhart is Mitch. Directed by Gregory Mosher. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Substance of Fire—Jon Robin Baitz's play about an intransigent publisher at odds with his grown children, having moved from Playwrights Horizons, seems stronger than ever in this more formal theatre. The remarkable Ron Rifkin continues in the leading role, and he is ably supported by the members of the original company—Patrick Breen, Maria Tucci, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Jon Tenney. (3/9/92) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

'Tis Pity She's a Whore—Val Kilmer and Jeanne Tripplehorn in a production of John Ford's Jacobean tragedy, which JoAnne Akalaitis directed. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes April 19.)

Tubes—A performance work by Blue Man Group about art and other matters. (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.)

LONG RUNS

BREAKING LEGS: The Mafia meets Off Broadway. Philip Bosco and Vincent Gardenia play a pair of mobsters who back a new play in order to win a young dramatist for Gardenia's daughter. Tom Dulack wrote the comedy; John Tillinger directed it. With Larry Storch, Karen Valentine, Ronald Maccone, and Nick Wyman. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.). . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.). . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run turns thirty-two in May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.). . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.). . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510.). . . **LIPS TOGETHER, TEETH APART:** Two couples share a beach house on Fire Island over the Fourth of July weekend, in Terrence McNally's very funny play about a number of serious matters. With Christine Baranski, Joanne Camp, Jonathan Hadary, and Brian Kerwin; directed by John Tillinger. Starting April 22, Ken Kliban replaces Mr. Hadary. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.). . . **LOST IN YONKERS:** There's not one glimmer of honesty or authenticity in this family melodrama by Neil Simon. Set in Yonkers during the Second World War, it's about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.). . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **MISS SAIGON:** Oh, the horror! The horror! (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.). . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.). . . **PAGEANT:** A musical spoof of beauty contests. Book and lyrics by Bill Russell and Frank Kelly and music by Albert Evans. Conceived and directed by Robert Longbottom. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 262-3333.). . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **THE SECRET GARDEN:** This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **SONG OF SINGAPORE:** A musical with a promising concept: turn a Polish veterans' hall into a Singapore night club, circa 1941, and spill murder and mayhem onto the premises. Unfortunately, the lavish settings (by John Lee Beatty) and the musical talent cannot conceal a very thin story and a host of excruciatingly bad jokes. (17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 228-0844.). . . **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine makes an engaging Rogers, but that is not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

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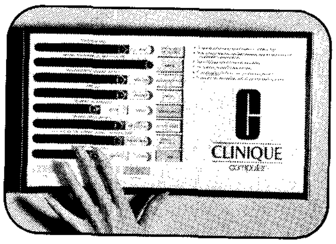
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American Ballet Theatre's "Symphonic Variations"

DANCE

WE dropped in at the studios of American Ballet Theatre a couple of times recently to watch rehearsals of "Symphonic Variations," the 1946 ballet by Frederick Ashton, which is being given its A.B.T. New York première this season. The staging has been overseen by the Royal Ballet's Michael Somes, who performed in the original production and to whom the choreographer entrusted care of the work. Assisting Mr. Somes were his wife, Wendy Ellis, who performed in the ballet during the nineteen-seventies, with the Royal, and Judy Thomsen, who assisted Mr. Somes in staging it a few years ago, for the Dutch National Ballet—the only other permanent company outside of England for which "Symphonic Variations" has been staged. Georgina Parkinson—a former Royal principal and now a ballet mistress with A.B.T.—also gave Mr. Somes comments. Mr. Somes is a tall, craggy-featured gentleman with thick white hair, a theatrically gruff manner, and a somewhat acidulous humor. "I'm a wreck! I'm a wreck!" he said at the end of one of the rehearsals, though while he said it he was smiling.

"Symphonic Variations," set to César Franck's brisk orchestral composition of the same title, is regarded as one of Ashton's top-drawer plotless works. If you've read David Vaughan's "Frederick Ashton and His Ballets," you've learned how the dance images evolved out of a rather elaborate mystical idea about love and the four seasons which the choreographer developed during the Second World War, while he was in the R.A.F., and also how "Symphonic" served as an important antecedent for an even purer distillation by Ashton of classical dancing—the "Monotones" suites of 1965 and 1966. If you talk to someone who has danced "Symphonic," however, the first thing you're likely to hear is that the ballet is a killer on the breathing. Its cast of three men and three women remains onstage for the entire eighteen minutes of the work, and there is almost no moment when any of them relieves the others.

"All dancing is hard if you do it properly," Mr. Somes said at one point, "but this is hard in a particular fashion. The six people must all do it one way and be exactly together. It's a kind of discipline, especially for first-class and soloist dancers, and it's one you want to reject at first." Miss Ellis added, "Even at the Royal, it was rare to get one acceptable cast of six people for this ballet. At A.B.T., we have three." At another rehearsal, Mr. Somes introduced the theme of national comparisons. "I don't want to see old Cadillacs working," he told one cast, in correction of a transition step. "I want to see Rolls-Royce gear changes."

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—The company opens its spring season, which continues through June 28, with a performance of "The Sleeping Beauty." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. April 22 at 8.)

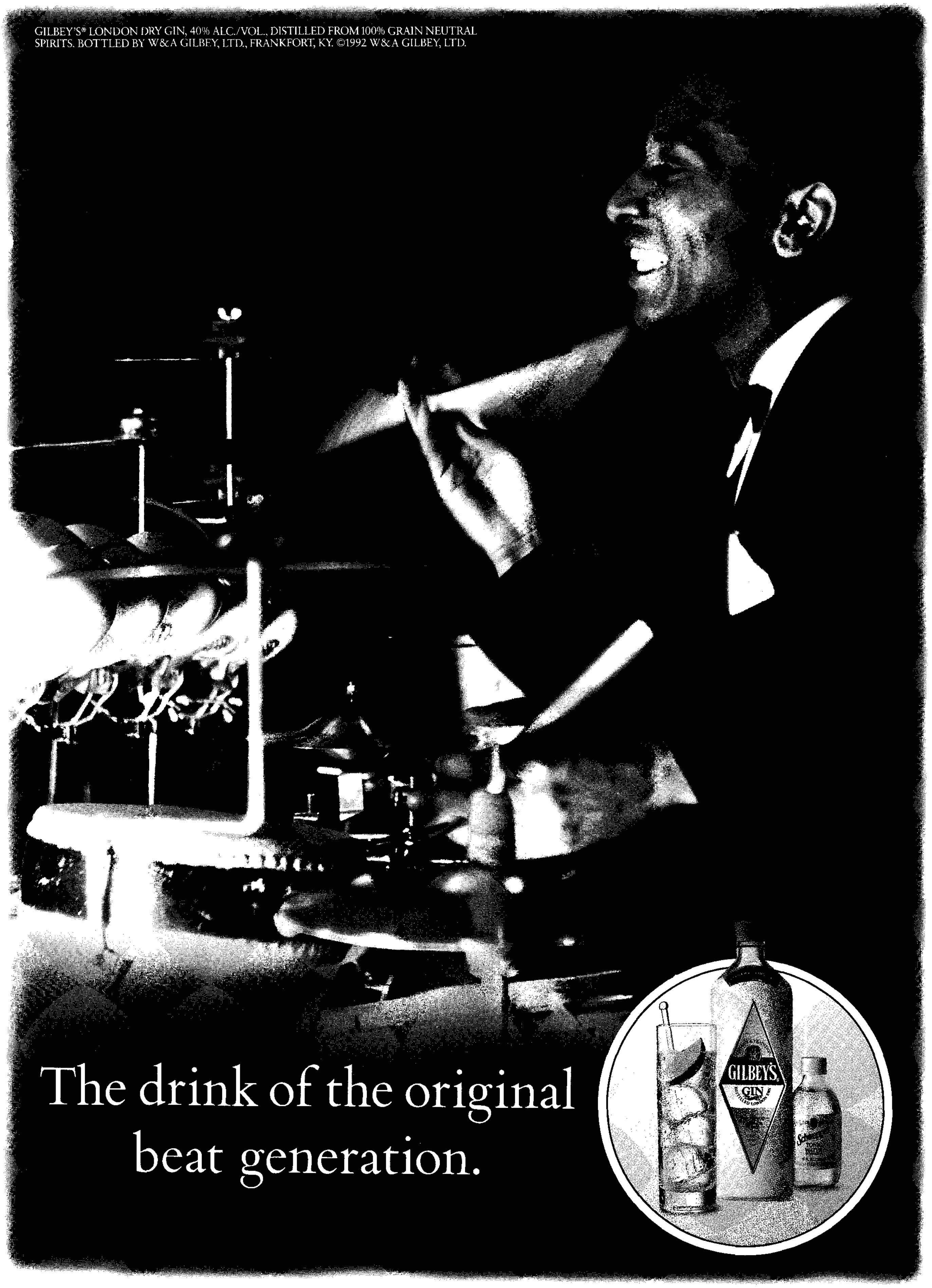
AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE—Opening performances of the spring engagement, which will run through June 20. April 20-21 at 8 and April 22 at 2 and 8: "Peter and the Wolf," "Symphonic Variations," and "Theme and Variations." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP—Final performances of the engagement. April 14 and April 16-17 at 8, and April 18 at 2 and 8: Two New York premières, "Behemoth" and "Going Away Party"; "Songs That Tell a Story"; and "Lovey." "Behemoth" is performed in silence, and the other pieces are set to recorded country-and-Western or rock-and-roll songs, by the Louvin Brothers, the Violent Femmes, and Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys. (Manhattan Center Grand Ballroom, 311 W. 34th St. For tickets, call 307-4100.)

ODC/SAN FRANCISCO—Presenting "The Velveteen Rabbit," which is billed as the "first full-length modern dance for children." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. April 14-17 at 7 and April 18-19 at 2 and 7.)

OKINAWAN TRADITIONAL DANCE AND MUSIC—A fourteen-member troupe in court dances, nineteenth-century *zo-odori* dances, and folk dances. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 15-16 at 8.)

JAZZ TAP ENSEMBLE—A Los Angeles-based company in the opening performances of a one-week engagement that will run through April 26. Jimmy Slyde joins the group as a guest artist. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. April 21-22 at 8.)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NIGHT LIFE

WHAT we like is a band that's not afraid to kick over a drum or two, grind a microphone into the floor with a bootheel, or fling an acoustic guitar into the audience. Such a band is Seattle's Pearl Jam. What's odd, though, is to see these theatrics performed during a taping for "MTV Unplugged," a show that features rock bands playing acoustic instruments. Has Pete Seeger ever behaved like this? Pearl Jam has been generating a lot of heat in alternative-rock circles lately, inspiring a few jealous swipes in print from Kurt Cobain, of the rival Seattle militia Nirvana. Pearl Jam rose from the ashes of local legend Green River, by way of Mother Love Bone. (Genealogies are important in Seattle rock.) The group is hard to place: too long-haired to be punks, too aggressive to be hippies, too sensitive to be metalheads. The lead singer, Eddie Vedder, is like a composite of Jim Morrison and the Matt Dillon character in "Drugstore Cowboy"—half sexy-dangerous, half charmingly delinquent.

The show was taped at Kaufman Astoria Studios, in Queens. The entire set—a stage, encircling chairs and bleachers, twisted, gauzy metallic sheets hanging from the ceiling (for atmosphere)—took up only a small portion of the darkened, armory-size space. Pearl Jam cheated a bit on the format: their acoustic guitars were plugged in. Though the audience was warned that, to placate the TV gods, songs might have to be repeated, the band ran straight through their set—assuredly, and with a ragged intensity. They expanded their songs, which aren't overly concerned with pop structure to begin with, into leisurely mini-workouts: stretching, jogging, running. Mr. Vedder, who has a gruff, urgent voice, was the center of attention at all times. At first, we were inclined to think that the band's antics were a somewhat forced bid for rebel status. But then we had another thought: maybe Pearl Jam just doesn't like to play quietly.

A Louis Armstrong tribute at the Knitting Factory

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**MARY CLEERE HARAN** is in the midst of a month-long engagement in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Haran is presenting a new program, one that includes a segment devoted to songs by Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Burke. Shows at nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

ARTHUR'S TAVERN, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—A quirky, endearing Village watering hole, perpetually decorated for the holidays—all of them. Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy, Fridays and Saturdays to Mabel Godwin, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band. Music from nine-thirty.

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A sleek, green-walled room with brass railings and mounted O'Keeffian animal skulls. Look closer and you'll find that the skulls are wearing earrings. After the show, be sure and check out the adjoining restaurant/tapas bar, which looks like the indoor food market of your dreams, and features a mural filled with people resembling Bob, Carol, Ted, and Alice. On April 20, singer **JULIE WILSON** kicks off a cabaret series to benefit the People with AIDS Coalition. Performances will be held every Monday at eight through June 15. Closed Mondays.

BIRDLAND, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—Many musicians who visit this jazz house are honored—if that's the word—by having their portraits done, "in concert," by the house artist. These impressionistic renderings round out a glossy décor that includes flying-saucer light fixtures, burgundy velvet drapes, and some neon wading birds. The **ED RUSSELL** trio is here on April 15; **JOAN TYLER** appears on April 16; the **BIG NICK NICHOLAS** quartet comes in April 17-18; and the **JON WEISS** trio performs on April 19. Music from nine. Dining.

BITTER END, 149 Bleecker St. (673-7030)—The free passes to this club could pave most of Greenwich Village—and they often do. The Bitter End was all abuzz in the seventies, when it was a stopping point for the sort of singers whose records you can now order from television: Gordon Lightfoot, Melissa Manchester, Neil Sedaka.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This blue-on-blue club is the place to find big-league jazz artists; it's an institution and it knows it: how many other clubs sell their own belt buckles? Guitarist **JOHN MC LAUGHLIN,** who will be performing with a duo here April 14-19, once said, "I have to believe that people don't need to be played down to, this big rock-and-roll audience in America included." McLaughlin has been bending minds for about twenty years now, and his career moves have occasionally been met with raised eyebrows. In the seventies, for instance, he turned from the jazz-rock outfit known as the Mahavishnu Orchestra, which had a devout following, to Shakti, an all-acoustic band that sat cross-legged and improvised along Eastern lines. **GROVER WASHINGTON, JR.,** starts up on April 21. Music from nine. Dining.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—This big, airy folk-and-rock club tends to be the site of a lot of music-industry bashes. If you have trouble getting tickets to the early show, it's usually because some record company has bought the place out. The atmosphere here, as a result, can be a bit weird: the record-company types have to have fun, because their own artists are onstage, but they can't have too much fun, because their bosses are watching. The later shows, though they're not as well attended and though they tend to run late, are much looser in spirit. The earnest, Marlboro-voiced **EDDIE MONEY,** who has written some anthem-like pop-rock hooks in his day, gives an acoustic performance on April 14. **HOWARD JONES,** an adherent of reflective adult pop, will be here on April 16, also playing acoustic. Jones recently released a new album, titled "In the Running." Shows at eight and eleven. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Next door, there's a bustling, garishly lit market. Within the narrow walls of this venerable piano-and-bass preserve, however, everything is easy on the eyes and ears. Pianist **DANILO PEREZ** and saxophonist **DAVID SANCHEZ** perform in a quartet through April 18; a trio consisting of pianist **KENNY DREW, JR.,** bassist **SANTI DEBRIANO,** and drummer **AKIRA TANA** starts up on April 20. Music from ten. Dining.

CAFÉ SIN-É, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—An unpretentious storefront café devoted to such things as Irish stew and the *Irish Times.* There's no stage per se, but bohemian musicians gather around a piano and work up some wistful sets while bohemian patrons sit writing in journals, rolling cigarettes, or lingering over one of the two varieties of beer sold here: Budweiser and Rolling Rock. Sin-é means "that's it" in Gaelic and is *not* Sinéad O'Connor's nickname. The café is a nice place to while away an hour, and you never know who'll turn up and tune up. Music generally begins at about eight-thirty.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is home to actress-singer **DIXIE CARTER.** Carter, who's best known for playing an interior decorator on the TV series "Designing Women," is singing serious and silly numbers by Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, and John Wallowitch, among others. Tuesdays through Saturdays at eight-forty-five and ten-forty-five. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano. Carroll's sets, which are usually equal parts jazz and cabaret, include songs by Gershwin, Porter, Harold Arlen, Dizzy Gillespie, and Billy Strayhorn, along with some of her own originals. Her vocals can be on the thin side, but her piano playing is always breezy and cool. Music from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—The city's most famed rock club, a dark, narrow cave with neon-beer-sign stalactites and ancestral graffiti, is part sacred burial ground and part historic landmark, but it hasn't succumbed to nostalgia: new and used bands of every stripe continue to pass through nightly. Music from eight on Sundays and Mondays, from eight-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (255-7373)—A club that features "only Chicago-area blues artists working with their regular Chicago blues bands." This concept may not appeal to New York blues artists, but it could save local blues aficionados a trip to the Midwest. The schedule: the Professor Eddie Lusk Blues Revue April 14-16; **FENTON ROBINSON** April 17-18; and **ROOSEVELT (BOOBA) BARNES** beginning April 21. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

CONDON'S, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—In the shadow of the Zeckendorf Towers sits this stucco-walled grotto, whose intimate scale makes it a fine spot for jazz. Saxophonist **LOU DONALDSON** leads a quartet through April 19; the **BARRY HARRIS** trio begins a week-long engagement on April 21. Shows Tuesdays through Sundays at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty, Fridays and Saturdays at nine-thirty, eleven-thirty, and one.

DAN LYNCH, 221 Second Ave., at 14th St. (677-0911)—As uninviting a hole-in-the-wall as you're likely to find, this blues bar is dingy, depressingly lit, and located on a block out of a Gus Van Sant movie. In the world of blues, however, this spells authenticity, and the bands here are often worth the trouble. Music from ten nightly.

DIVA, 306 E. 81st St. (650-1928)—A newly hatched restaurant and piano bar. It's a modest-sized, brick-walled room that offers Italian fare and, Tuesdays through Saturdays, the musings of pianist **CHARLES DE FOREST.** Three of De Forest's compositions appear on Tony Bennett's most recent studio album, "Astoria," and one of them, the soaring "When Do the Bells Ring for Me?," has quickly become one of Bennett's regular showstoppers. Music begins around eight-thirty. Closed Sundays.

DUPLEX, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—A two-floor entertainment center. The bright, clean, wedge-shaped downstairs bar has French windows giving on to the bustle of Seventh Avenue, but the clamor indoors is far greater. Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, and the waitresses sing/shout pop standards with risqué lyrics and fire off wisecracks across the room; patrons are encouraged to take the mike, too. Upstairs there's a quieter bar and a cabaret, where you'll find a variety of performers nightly.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—Through the iffy-looking side door, down the famous fun-house tunnel that's lined with mirrors and corrugated tin, and down a short flight of stairs, you'll find this softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz preserve. BOBBY WATSON, VICTOR LEWIS, and HORIZON are here April 14-19. JOE HENDERSON'S quartet begins work on April 21. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor LES PAUL, the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A busy bar-and-grill in the piano-bass district. The musicians set up in the dining room, a clubby-looking space with leather banquettes and well-preserved collectibles: Sunday *Herald Tribune* covers, First World War posters, Hirschfeld cartoons. Up front, at the bar, you can keep your eye on the musicians, the conversationalists, and sidewalk life. Music from about nine-thirty Wednesdays through Sundays.

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A frat house for the avant-garde. In some ways, the Knitting Factory doesn't really belong in New York: the cover charge is too reasonable, the management is too laid back, the audiences are too polite. It's a slice of post-collegiate counterculture that somehow landed on Houston Street. BAND OF SUSANS, one of New York's earlier practitioners of noise rock, is here on April 15. Led by singer-songwriter-guitarist Robert Poss, the group conveys its often bleak emotional dispatches through a hail of enveloping, distorted guitar noise. Not recommended for the volume-sensitive. Other events: THE EX and TOM CORA on April 16; COPERNICUS on April 17; GARY LUCAS on April 18; and a Louis Armstrong tribute on April 19, featuring DOC CHEATHAM, DAVID MURRAY, and others. Music after nine.

LONE STAR ROADHOUSE, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—Spiffed-up theatre patrons walk by this club's façade—a Silver Eagle bus, with tires you can kick—and scratch their heads. Inside, big bearded guys with cowboy hats rub elbows at the bar while newcomers study the Texas memorabilia and, upstairs, the display of vintage Gibson guitars. The dining room, where bands hold sway, features a Wright Brothers-era airplane suspended from the ceiling, a dance floor where you can kick up some dust, and a balcony for quiet types. Music after nine. Dining.

LUDLOW STREET CAFÉ, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—A modest below-stairs room that looks like a slightly spruced-up tenement-building apartment. There's cheap food, a Greater East Village crowd, and, every Monday night, BEAT RODEO, a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mix of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, the Velvets, and various found pop numbers. Sets from about eleven.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. BLITZSPEER is here on April 16; THE EX and TOM CORA perform on April 17; and the CRANES, a strange, blurry, inscrutable rock outfit, come in on April 18. Along with the Cranes will be BELLY, a band that features TANYA DONELLY, who's best known for her work with the provocative but ill-fated Throwing Muses. Shows at ten on Thursdays, and at eleven on Fridays and Saturdays.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—There's more to Michael's Pub than Woody Allen, whose occasional Monday-night Dixieland binges have given the place a little star cachet. Non-filmmakers can usually be found onstage here the rest of the week, in a main dining room that strives for the appearance of a British pub but looks more like an American family restaurant. Still, there's a real nice red telephone booth when you walk in the door. VIC DAMONE, a figure from the golden era of romantic crooners, makes his first New York club appearance in over a decade here, beginning April 21. Though Sinatra once called him "the singer with the best vocal equipment in the business," Damone has had a rocky career. He's been an intermittent member of the board, but never quite made it to chairman. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine-fifteen, Fridays and Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen, and Sundays at six-thirty.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret where a club soda costs, well, a *lot*. There are plenty of niceties if you're so inclined: an ear-popping express elevator in which you can mingle with the famous; tables scattered with plastic diamonds and sapphires; and rest-room attendants who hover near the sink asking "Is the water too warm?" Rainbow & Stars is currently home to a delightful show bearing the title "'S Wonderful, 'S Marvelous, 'S Gershwin!" Among the performers are JUDY BLAZER, STAN FREEMAN, and JO ANNE WORLEY. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Mondays.

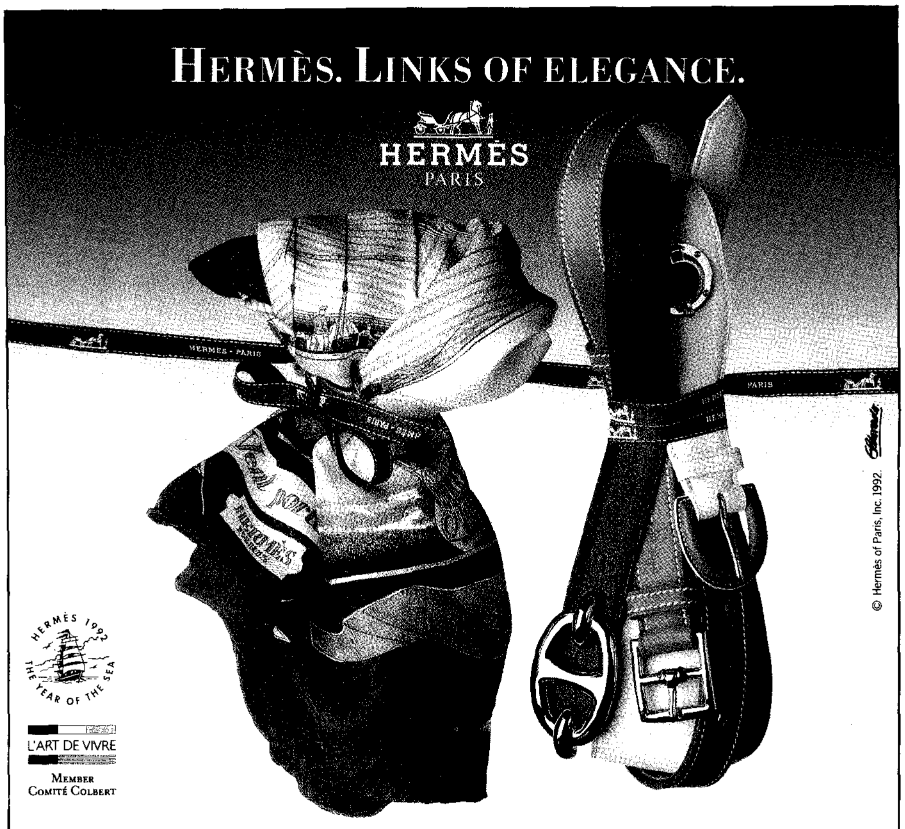
RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—It may look like a plain old steak house, and the photos on the walls may look like Sardi's leftovers, but in the back room you'll find swing bands, Dixieland combos, and couples sprung from the legacy of Fred and Ginger. Mondays belong to the Smith Street Jazz Society, Tuesdays and Fridays to VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS, Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. Show times vary.

RITZ, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This space was once a theatre, as the cherubim friezes and Louis the Something ceiling attest. Then it was Studio 54, and, if you try real hard, you can still hear the grunts, moans, and snorts of seventies disco ghosts. MTV'S 120 MINUTES TOUR, which is dedicated to edgy, alternative bands both young and old, will touch down here April 21-22 and again on April 24. B.A.D. II, LIVE, BLIND MELON, and PIL will also be performing. John Lydon, formerly of the Sex Pistols and currently of PiL, fronts a strangely disappointing show. The music is tight and colorful, but where Lydon's stage persona used to drip with anger, it now drips with attitude. When Lydon insults his crowds, a favorite pastime, he comes off not as an iconoclast but as a rich, bored, aging rock star. There's no doubt that PiL is an occasionally brilliant band—their album "Compact Disc" was positively excoriating—but onstage everything seems a bit perfunctory and choreographed. Show times vary.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—The closest thing in Manhattan to a rain forest, this venerable club has many selling points: tropical drinks, Brazilian food, faux palm trees, a thatch-roofed bar. The live music is primarily from Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean, and the dance floor is usually hopping. The Jamaican singer SISTER CAROL, who performs on April 17, was discovered by American audiences in Jonathan Demme's "Something Wild." She sings in a style called toasting—the Jamaican version of rap—and often has politics on her mind. But she's such a high-spirited performer that she can turn a civics lesson into a good time. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Sundays.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—If you arrive late for a show at this celebrated shrine of jazz, you run the risk of being seated in the glass-enclosed terrace, which means you'll need a periscope to see the show and a parka to live through it. Otherwise, Sweet Basil is just the right environment for patrons—chiefly because it has a silence-or-else policy during shows. Two of the club's de-facto house bands will be on hand during the next couple of weeks: cornettist NAT ADDERLEY'S quintet, April 14-19, and pianist TOMMY FLANAGAN'S trio, beginning April 21. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter MILES EVANS is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

SWEETWATERS, 170 Amsterdam Ave., at 67th St. (873-4100)—Pink carnations on the tables, shrimp creole on the menu, and a sunken dance floor with a circa-1975 mirrored disco ball. The stage, dominated by a white grand piano, is usually given over to soul and R. & B.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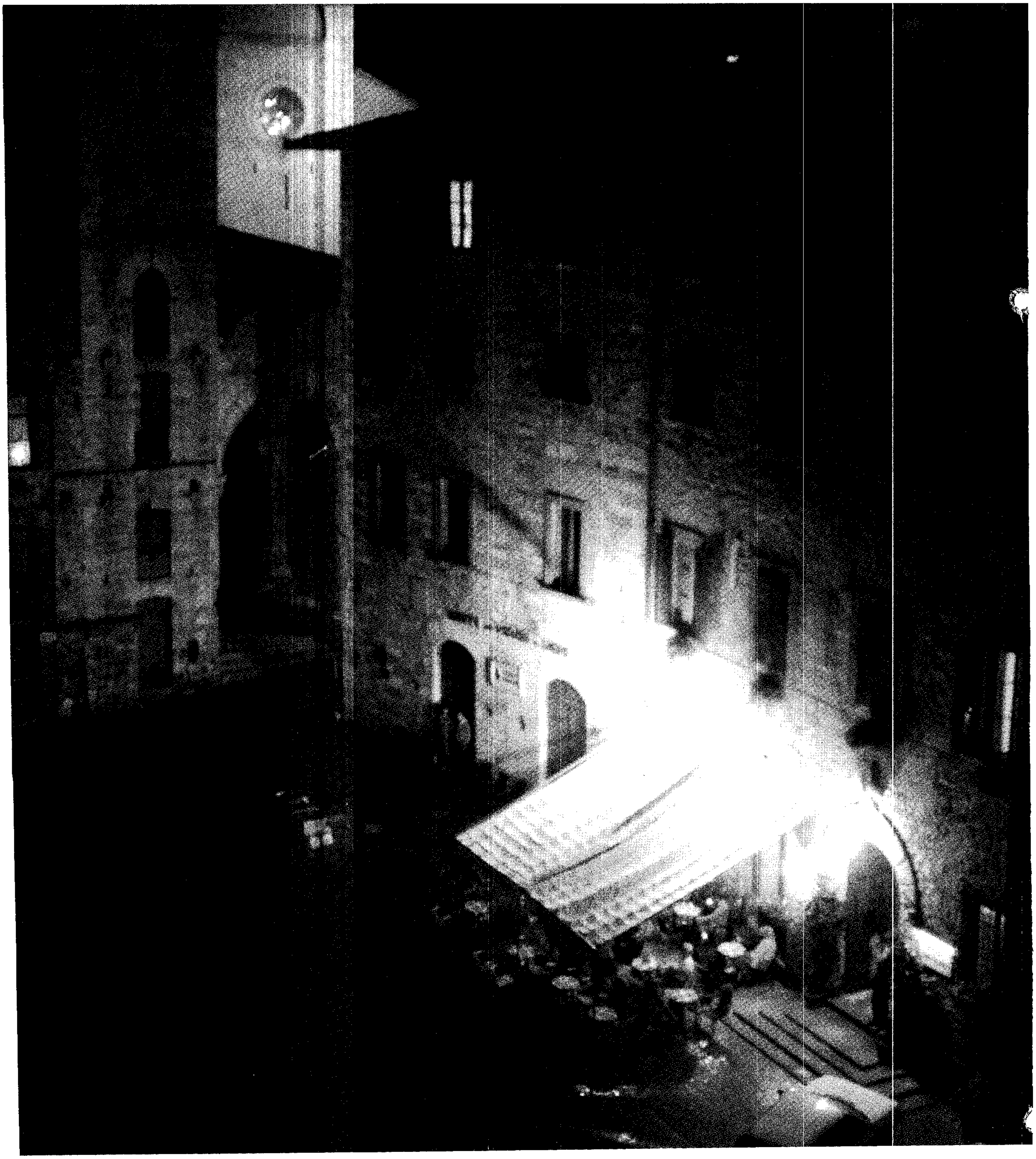


Italian Dining. The Quality of Life.

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—Seventeenth-century Dutch drawings—of the landscape, genre, and figure variety—by Rembrandt, Ruisdael, Goltzius, and many others. Through April 26. . . . ¶ A small show of printed books and bindings produced in seventeenth-century Flanders and Holland. Through April 26. . . . ¶ Selections on view from the library's permanent collection include one of its three Gutenberg Bibles, Stevenson's autograph manuscript of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and the original scores of symphonies by Brahms and Mahler. Through April 26. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Walt Whitman and New York." The Long Island-born Brooklynite is celebrated in a show that juxtaposes prose and poetry with nineteenth-century paintings, prints, and photographs. . . . ¶ "Broadway! 125 Years of Musical Theatre." A large assortment of objects—including paintings, posters, scripts, models, sheet music, and memorabilia—from nearly seventy-five productions that have bowed on the Great White Way. First seen in New York at the I.B.M. Gallery last summer. . . . ¶ Fifty paintings, watercolors, and lithographs by the Dutch artist Adriaan Lubbers (1892-1954), whose fascination with New York City is reflected in his urban landscapes. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The hundred-and-sixty-seventh annual juried exhibition includes oil paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, pastels, watercolors, and an architectural drawing. Through May 10. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—"1+1+1," a series of recent sculptural projects by Alfredo Jaar, primarily in the form of large-scale light-box installations. Through April 19. . . . ¶ "The Big Nothing or Le Presque Rien," a group exhibition in which each artist has been asked to contemplate the notions of emptiness and materiality. Through April 19. . . . ¶ Jeffry Mitchell's installation consists of rubber, plaster, and latex tableaux of cartoon figures, toy creatures, and other kitschy icons. Through April 19. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

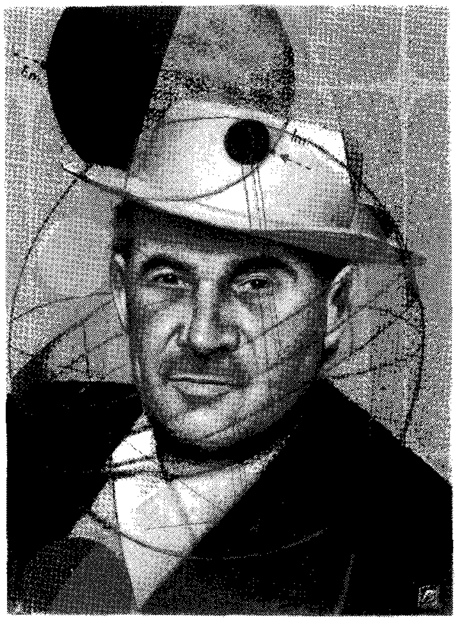
New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—A show chronicling the design, construction, and urban context of New York's City Hall (1803-12). Forty-seven drawings, along with watercolors, prints, books, and a model, illuminate the neoclassical edifice. Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, 11 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—One of the more comprehensive shows in the current crop of Walt Whitman centenary celebrations is "In Life or Death Forever": a hundred and fifty manuscripts, books, photographs, and letters culled from both the Berg and Oscar Lion collections. (Berg Exhibition Room.). . . ¶ "On the Edge" is a show of more than two hundred black-and-white and color photographs from the covers and pages of *Vogue*. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.). . . ¶ An eclectic collection of recent acquisitions from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Some of the works are by famous photographers, some are by unknowns; some are generic, some are gems. Through May 2. (Third Floor Gallery.) (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Short List—**George Grosz,** Soufer, 1015 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (through April 30); **Peter Kennard,** Kent, 47 E. 63rd St. (open Mondays, closed Saturdays, through May 29); **David Salle,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. (through April 25); **Reeve Schley,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (through May 2); **Richard Serra,** Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. (through April 18), and Pace, 142 Greene St. (through April 25); **Jonathan Silver,** Munroe, 9 E. 84th St. (opens at noon Wednesdays through Saturdays, through April 25); **Michael Steiner,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. (open Mondays, through April 28); **Donald Sultan,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. (through April 25); **Adja Yunkers** and **Hedda Sterne,** CDS Gallery, 76 E. 79th St. (through April 30).



Keith Sonnier

GALLERIES—57th STREET AREA

Georg Baselitz—In Europe, Baselitz is widely regarded as the most important living German painter, and yet Americans have had an uneasy relationship with this fifty-four-year-old artist after being belatedly introduced to his work, in the early eighties. These are very good paintings, of upside-down figures with large, childlike splotches of paint splashed violently over them. Done on an intimidating scale, they seem to suck out most of the air around them, so they're unlikely to woo doubters. Through April 18. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St.)

Brad Davis / Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt—In the past few years, much has been made of the influence of Chinese landscape painting on contemporary Western artists. And no one else seems to have studied those traditions, or emulated their values, as closely as Davis has. For his first show here in several years, he is exhibiting several beautiful triptychs with flora in the center panel and craggy rock formations in both side panels. In the two most recent paintings, which are also the strongest, the plant life in the center has been painted with a delicate feathery technique that suggests that Davis, like the Chinese masters, is aiming to capture the essence of the thing being painted while at the same time somehow displaying his own state of mind. / A fresh and exuberant reconstruction of a work made in 1969-70, consisting of dozens of colored-foil chalices. Despite the work's religious subject matter, its title, "The Summer Palace of Czarina Tatlina," slyly suggests some very modern ideas about visionary art and camp. The show also includes several new painterly collages that are chock full of pictorial play. Through April 25. (Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Bill Jensen / Myron Stout (1908-87)—Appealing gouaches of worm-like shapes in various shades of gray. / Surprisingly delicate landscape drawings, from 1953, by an otherwise emphatically abstract painter. Through May 9. (Washburn, 41 E. 57th St.)

William Scott (1913-89)—An attractive show of still lifes, mostly from the fifties and sixties, by a British painter little known here. The works from the early fifties have a certain pictographic mysteriousness about them. Shortly after he painted them, Scott developed a more pictorial composition, with modest arrangements of bowls and cups. There are also some delicate figurative drawings, from the seventies, done in blue gouache. Through April 25. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Short List—**Frederic Amat,** Prats, 24 W. 57th St. (through May 8); **Arman,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St., and Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway (through May 2); **Dozier Bell,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through April 25); **Martin Chirino,** Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through May 2); **Jane Freilicher,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. (through April 25); **Richard Gerstl** and **Oskar Kokoschka,** Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. (through May 9); **Sidney Goodman,** Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St. (through May 16); **Robert Greene,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. (through May 2); **Red Grooms,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through May 2); **Marsden Hartley,** Babcock, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through April 25); **John Heliker,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through May 2); **Bryan Hunt,** Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St. (through April 25); **Ephraim Rubenstein,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. (through May 2); **Charles Seliger,** Rosenfeld, 50 W. 57th St. (through May 9); **Philip Wofford** (through April 30) and **Robert Arneson** (through May 29), Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.; **Albert York,** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. (through April 18).

GALLERIES—SoHo

Roger Brown—This exhibition focusses on paintings made to look like circus banners, with circles and bubbles of short text that emphasize the political complexion of Brown's reassuringly stylized paintings. His themes range from AIDS to the plight of the American farmer. Brown's portrait of Magic Johnson is quite brilliant, from the icon's American-flag-adorned uniform, which elevates him to mythic status, to the detailing of his larger-than-life face, with its boyish smile. Through April 28. (Kind, 136 Greene St.)

John Currin—A provocative exhibition of paintings that spoof studio portraiture. All are of older women, and there's something terribly wrong with each of them. The body of one painfully thin woman is perfectly posed in a state of frozen relaxation. Another woman, in a painting that is gripping for its high degree of abstractness, has simply been relegated to a corner of the canvas. Each background is a single color, ranging from muddied salmon to what might best be described as faded pea green. Through May 2. (Rosen, 130 Prince St.)

Walter de Maria—While many artists have spent the past two decades sticking pins in such modernist bogeymen as transcendence and heroicism, thank goodness this one has been able to stay the course. His newest sculptural orchestration is the "5-7-9 Series": all twenty-seven possible triads of stainless-steel rods with five, seven, or nine sides. The rods are less than two feet long, and each group sits on a dark granite plinth. This forest of elfin columns has neither the high-speed, buzzing energy of the artist's "Broken Kilometer" nor the dormant basso of his "Vertical Kilometer," but a kind of crystalline mid-level hum, somehow both humbling and humble. This exhibition also offers an opportunity to revisit two of New York's more extraordinary permanent art works, the artist's "New York Earth Room" (141 Wooster St.) and "Broken Kilometer" (393 West Broadway). Through May 9. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St.)

Hans-Peter Feldmann—Feldmann is known for his inexpensive artist's books, a format whose informality is well suited to him; the wall works and object displays here are likewise incidental in spirit, but they suffer from the formality of their presentation. His displays of common dinner plates and picture frames are mundane, as are his hand-colored Xeroxes of pictures of Oriental carpets, of Eiffel Tower postcards, and of photographs of desserts. On the other hand, they do awaken the urge to travel and the urge to eat. Through April 25. (303 Gallery, 89 Greene St.)

Perry Hoberman / Jack Risley—Miscellaneous constructions, some banal, others engaging. The most interesting ones are in a group called "Excess Luggage," which consists of old suitcases equipped with peepholes, through which 3-D photos may be viewed. Particularly memorable is a valise with four holes on each side, through which one sees menacing hands with sharp red fingernails. But there are so many of these works that one's attention flags before one has peeped into all of them. / Two new, large cardboard-box sculptures covered with electric blankets—one with pink ones, the other with blue ones—conjure a crafty child at play, and little more. Through April 25. (Postmasters, 80 Greene St.)

Jon Kessler—One sculpture here, a two-ton music box whose steel drum rotates slowly to pluck a set of metal bars, plays an amplified, reverb-laden version of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Kessler has another work that treats of the artist as performer. It is an ingenious painting rack in a glass display case; the conveyor track inside slowly lifts up a panel, moves it to the back, and drops it down as it picks up the next one. The paintings inside were made by Christopher Wool; there is a text by Paul Auster. Through April 25. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

SCHOOL COLORS

Sculptor Justen Ladda remembers the day, seven years ago, when a student was assigned to take him on a tour of P.S. 7, an elementary school in the Kingsbridge section of the Bronx. "She was pointing at things, saying, 'What we need here is some color. This school does not look happy,'" Mr. Ladda recalls. When they arrived at the auditorium, Mr. Ladda noticed that the stage area was painted an unattractive brown. "The little girl said the school had tried to match the color of the piano," he said.

Walking through the corridors of the school's two upper floors today, visitors feel their spirits lift, and Mr. Ladda deserves some of the credit for this: last year, he completed the interior design (commissioned by Percent for Art, a city-funded program sponsoring art in public places) of a two-story addition to P.S. 7. The vinyl-tile floor stretches out in a jazzy black-and-yellow checkerboard pattern; bands of black and white ceramic tiles edged with rows of tiny red and blue tiles accent the walls; four alcoves housing water fountains display mosaics of such aquatic scenes as a tropical bay and a waterfall (against backgrounds of luminous Persian blue and with shallow panels of gold leaf). Whimsical painted-bronze sculptures cast from toys sit high up in niches in each corridor. A scale model of Mad Ludwig's fairy-tale Neuschwanstein castle (from Mr. Ladda's native Bavaria) graces the second floor, and another, of an astronaut seated in a sort of flying chair, adorns the third.

Oddly enough, Mr. Ladda attributes P.S. 7's new, happy face to the structured Bauhaus aesthetic that permeated his artistic education at the Gesamthochschule, in Kassel. Mr. Ladda, though, has combined the Bauhaus's parallel lines, dominant right angles, and bold primary colors into a playful American design that also makes itself felt in eight new classrooms and several bathrooms, all brightly tiled, and on stairwells cheerfully decorated in blue, black, yellow, and red.

WALTER MARTIN—Fetishized Victoriana is getting tiresome, but this artist has created a piece or two worthy of at least a passing glance. One, a meticulously crafted clock with a few darts stuck in it, is an image of a hopelessly childish desire to stop time. The other, exhibited here before, is a swipe at the art market's insatiable greed. It consists of what looks like a large mechanical egg holding a knife and fork. When a quarter is inserted, the hungry egg jiggles and jolts as it eats up the money, which drops into the base with a hollow *plunk*. Through April 18. (P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway.)

"ARTE POVERA: EARLY WORKS"—An exquisite installation of works by nine artists, ranging from the rough industrial poetry of Giovanni Anselmo, who is represented by a long neon tube encased in a block of cement, to Luciano Fabro's eccentric, massive chicken foot, whose leg of pleated silk rises to the ceiling. Somewhere in between is Jannis Kounellis's rolled-up lead sheet resting on a metal bed frame, which, in true Beuysian fashion, is both literal and metaphorical. Through May 30. (SteinGladstone, 99 Wooster St.)

"ICONOGRAPHIC ABSTRACTION"—One large work apiece by Ross Bleckner, Richmond Burton, Peter Halley, and Philip Taaffe. Each of the artists is very skillful and clever, and three of the four have at various times made works of true poignancy. But all have been hyped to within an inch of their self-conscious aesthetic lives, and the work here seems to suffer from too much fast dancing. Through April 18. (Rubenstein-Diacono, 130 Prince St.)

"OVERLAY"—This is one of those shows that make no sense other than as a way for a gallery to link one of its own artists with others who are more famous. The connection between the artists here is superficial—they all use collage. Fortunately, the least-known artist in question, Wallace Berman (1926-1976), is represented by the most fascinating of the works on display, "Semina," a pamphlet-size publication of poetry and visual work by California artists, which Berman produced between 1957 and 1964. Much of the imagery has to do with sex. Also on display are characteristic works by John Baldessari, Jasper Johns, Matt Mullican, Allan McCollum, and Robert Rauschenberg; some Allen Ruppersberg paintings about art and life, whose newspaper sources are more interesting than the artist's treatment of them; and an engaging recent modest-sized painting by David Salle, the background of which is a Nouveau Réaliste wall of ripped posters. Through April 18. (Louver, 130 Prince St.)

SHORT LIST—**JAMES LEE BYARS,** Boone, 417 West Broadway (through April 25); **WILLIE COLE,** Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. (through May 16); **DAVID DEUTSCH,** Burgin, 130 Prince St. (through May 2); **KATE ERICSON AND MEL ZIEGLER,** Klein, 594 Broadway (through May 23); **JULIO GALÁN,** Nosei, 100 Prince St. (through April 25); **MIKE GLIER,** The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. (open Wednesday evenings until 8, through May 16); **RENÉE GREEN,** Hearn, 39 Wooster St. (through May 2); **MICHAEL JOAQUÍN GREY,** Gladstone, 99 Greene St. (through May 9); **DAVID HOLLOWELL,** Davidson, 415 West Broadway (through May 9); **GRACE KNOWLTON,** M-13, at 72 Greene St. (through April 25); **ANNETTE LEMIEUX** and **ANNETTE MESSAGER,** Baer, 476 Broome St. (through May 9); **LEONE & MACDONALD,** Fawbush, 76 Grand St. (through May 2); **ALFRED LESLIE,** Flynn, 113 Crosby St. (through June 27); **INGE MAHN,** Brown, 23 Watts St. (through May 2); **ALLAN MC COLLUM,** Weber, 142 Greene St. (through April 18); **ELIZABETH MURRAY,** Cooper, 155 Wooster St. (through April 29); **PETER NAGY** and **STEFANO ARIENTI,** Gorney, 100 Greene St. (through May 2); **ELLEN PHELAN,** Toll, 146 Greene St. (through May 2); **ANDREI ROITER,** Koury, 89 Greene St. (through April 29); **SUSAN SILAS,** Fiction-Nonfiction, 21 Mercer St. (through April 18); **KEITH SONNIER,** Castelli (420 West Broadway and 578 Broadway), and 65 Thompson Street Gallery (all through April 25).

OTHER GALLERIES

"FLAIR: FASHION COLLECTED BY TINA CHOW"—Tina Chow was a connoisseur and an extreme aesthete, not a clotheshorse. Her spectacular collection of fashion—bequeathed in part to the Fashion Institute of Technology and in part to the Kyoto Costume Institute—spans the twentieth century. Though it centers on some of the most rarefied objects ever to emerge from the cocoon of modern couture, it also includes such vernacular items as a thin white Chinese-cotton T-shirt. Chow was especially drawn to clothes with a subtle whiff of the trade winds about them, like a Balenciaga coat with a kimono-like, neck-elongating, thrown-back and rolled collar, or Fortuny's evocations of Byzantium and ancient Greece. Her rarest specimens—Dior's Watteau-inspired, draped evening wrap, for example, made from a grand and unbroken length of ice-blue satin—are without doubt among the most perfect creations in the history of the decorative arts. Through May 9. (Fashion Institute of Technology, 227 W. 27th St.)

SHORT LIST—**FAIRFIELD PORTER,** Hunter College Gallery, Lexington Ave. at 68th St. (opens at 1, through May 22); **ELAINE REICHEK,** Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 33 Washington Pl. (through May 16).

PHOTOGRAPHY

AFTER many years, New York finally has a show of Helen Levitt's work which is big enough to give viewers a true sense of this photographer's important contribution to the medium. The exhibition, which opened at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, is at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, until June 28. Within the field, Levitt's name has become virtually synonymous with New York street photography of the thirties and forties, though in fact she has retained her devotion to this subject right up to the present—and at this show you can see the differences as well as the continuity in her vision. Her unwavering commitment to street photography has meant that her work can now also be regarded as a personal record of some of the social changes that have occurred in neighborhoods where she shot—such as the East Village, the East Bronx, and Brooklyn.

Levitt's sensitivity to the different requirements of different times, as well as her intimate knowledge of photography, were no doubt important influences on her transition, in the late fifties, from black-and-white to color—and her equal fluency in both is rare. There is a certain innocence that comes through in the black-and-white work, whereas in the color images one notices, say, people's wariness. Although most of the photographs on view here were taken in New York, there is a small section of the show devoted to pictures Levitt took in Mexico, in 1941. These shots have a very different feel from her early work, one that has something to do with the difference between Levitt's sense of belonging and being a stranger.

Every time we see Levitt's photographs of children taken in the city in the thirties and forties, we are reminded how one-dimensional this subject has been in the hands of so many others. Levitt's portrayal of kids at playtime is—beautifully—about the democracy of having fun. One of our favorite pictures captures an abstract improvisation of a familiar childhood fantasy: it's a 1938 photograph of chalk graffiti on a wall that reads "Button to Secret Passage Press." There's no button. Just some circles drawn.

ALICE AUSTEN (1866-1952)—Photographs of the artist's friends and family at leisure that have an intimate, unself-conscious spirit. Austen possessed a definite photographic sensibility, however modest and however buried. These portraits reflect her sense of play—exposed ankles and people passed out at a tea party are just two examples of the frolics she recorded. Through May 22. (Arsenal Gallery, 830 Fifth Ave., at 64th St. Open 9 to 4:30, Mondays through Fridays.)

PAUL STRAND (1890-1976)—A retrospective of a hundred and thirty-four photographs spanning the artist's career. Through May 17. (Whitney Museum of American Art.)

SHORT LIST—FRÉDÉRIC BRENNER, International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through April 19); NANCY BURSON, Baum, 588 Broadway (through April 18); ANDREW BUSH, Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St. (through April 18); LOUISE DAHL-WOLFE, Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway (through May 2); BARBARA ESS, Marcus, 578 Broadway (through April 25); BISON FRERES and RICHARD TEPE, Lowinsky, 575 Broadway (through May 30); ROBERT HEINECKEN and GARRY WINOGRAND, Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through May 2); YOSHIHIKO ITO, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through May 16); EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE, International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through April 26); JOHN PFAHL, Borden, 560 Broadway (through May 9); CINDY SHERMAN, Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St. (through May 9); NICK WAPLINGTON, Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through May 2); SHIKANOSUKE YAGAKI, Houk Friedman, 1094 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. (through April 25).

MUSIC

IF one were to make a sort of parlor game of choosing the most revolutionary three-year span in the history of music, it would be hard to beat the period 1911-13. Just naming a few of the works on Simon Rattle's upcoming programs with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra—programs devoted to those years—practically makes the argument: Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire," Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," Debussy's "Images" and "Jeux," Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloé." And then think of what Busoni, Ives, Strauss, Mahler (who died in 1911, at work on a symphony), Prokofiev, and Bartók were up to at the same time. The expressive possibilities of music were opening out limitlessly; the grounding organizational principles were evaporating. "What key is it in?," a question once almost as straightforward as "How many legs has this animal?," was fast becoming not just unanswerable but beside the point. Expression and parody, rhythm and structure, sound and instrumentation—everything was in play. No composer of classic status dominated the scene: Brahms and Verdi were dead; Strauss and Debussy were established but "controversial"; others were of limited national appeal, were still obscure, or were part of one debated avant-garde or another. Somewhere in the eighteen-thirties, or perhaps in the late seventeen-eighties and early seventeen-nineties, one might find a comparably kaleidoscopic slice. Perhaps it will eventually turn out that we are in one now. We think of this period just before the First World War with awe. We also think that the big, hard-to-organize, sometimes riotous works it produced are exactly the sort of thing Mr. Rattle and his superbly trained orchestra do best. The concerts come with related lectures (an ongoing series at the Metropolitan Museum and a special series of pre-concert talks for ticket-holders at Carnegie Hall; for information, call 581-5197) and a looser grouping of additional concerts and related events.

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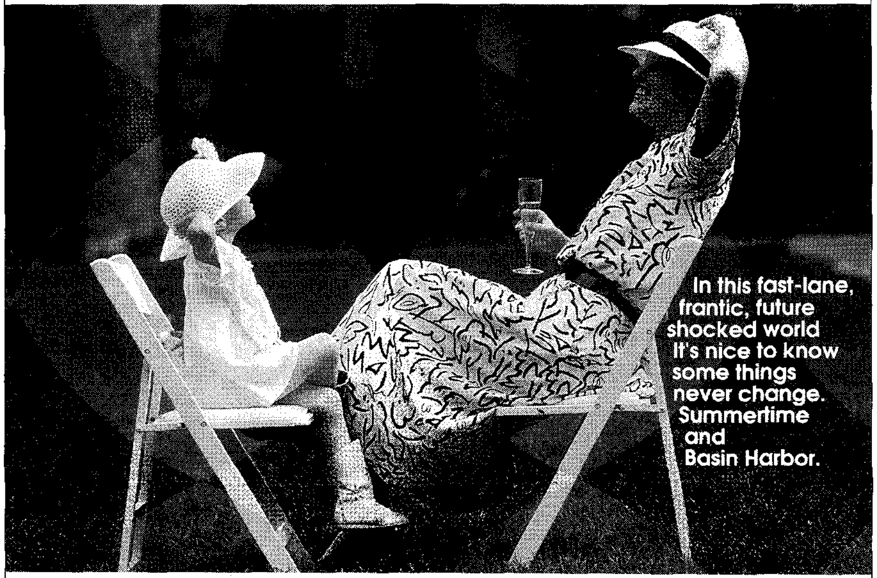

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MUSIC–Cont'd

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—Final performances of the season. **PARSIFAL,** with Deborah Polaski, Gary Lakes, Ekkehard Wlaschiha, Franz Mazura, and Jan-Hendrik Rootering; conducted by James Levine. (April 13 and April 17 at 6:30.)... **ELEKTRA,** with Hildegard Behrens, Deborah Voigt, Leonie Rysanek, James King, and Jan-Hendrik Rootering; James Levine. (April 14 at 8 and April 18 at 2.)... **BILLY BUDD,** with Graham Clark, Thomas Hampson, and James Morris; Charles Mackerras. (April 15 and April 18 at 8.)... **LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST,** with Barbara Daniels, Vladimir Popov, and Sherrill Milnes; Leonard Slatkin. (April 16 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Klaus Tennstedt conducting. April 14 at 7:30: Bruckner's Symphony No. 8.... ¶ April 16 at 8, April 17 at 11 A.M., and April 21 at 7:30: Brahms' Symphony No. 1 and Sibelius' Violin Concerto (with Nigel Kennedy).

Handel's "Messiah"—Composed in a three-week flurry of inspiration late in the summer of 1741, this most celebrated of all choral works was first performed on April 13, 1742, in Dublin's Music Hall, as a benefit for three charities. Charles Jennens, who compiled the libretto (from the King James Version of the Scriptures), termed the work "an entertainment." But when a noble admirer used that word when complimenting the composer following the première, Handel replied "My Lord, I should be sorry if I only entertained them; I wished to make them better." On the two-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of that historic première, Robert Shaw leads Handel's "Messiah," with the Atlanta Symphony Chamber Chorus, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and soloists Penelope Jensen (soprano), Marietta Simpson (mezzo-soprano), Jon Humphrey (tenor), and Victor Ledbetter (bass). (Carnegie Hall. April 13 at 8.)

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra—At Carnegie Hall. Simon Rattle conducts programs that examine the many new currents of musical expression that composers explored in the years 1911-13. April 14 at 8: Nielsen's Symphony No. 3 (the "Sinfonia Espansiva") and Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloé"; with soloists Elise Ross (soprano) and Robin Buck (baritone).... **NOTE:** In a pre-concert lecture, beginning at 6:45 and open to ticket-holders, Lawrence Kramer will speak about "Daphnis et Chloé."... ¶ April 15 at 8: Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" (with Ms. Ross), Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Emanuel Ax), and Debussy's "Images."... **NOTE:** In a pre-concert lecture, beginning at 6:45 and open to ticket-holders, Walter Frisch will speak about "Pierrot Lunaire."... ¶ April 16 at 8: Debussy's "Jeux (Poème Dansé)," Elgar's "Falstaff," and Stravinsky's "Le Sacre du Printemps."... **NOTE:** In a pre-concert lecture, beginning at 6:45 and open to ticket-holders, Simon Karlinsky will speak about "Le Sacre du Printemps."

St. Bartholomew's Choir—James Litton directs Fauré's Requiem and "Cantique de Jean Racine," with William Trafka supplying the organ accompaniment. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. April 15 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

Mozart on Period Instruments—The Orchestra of the Old Fairfield Academy (conducted by Thomas Crawford) backs up soprano Cynthia Sieden, who will sing several Mozart concert arias, and fortepianists Malcolm Bilson and Steven Lubin, who will share the pleasure of performing the composer's Piano Concertos in B-Flat Major (K. 238) and in A Major (K. 414) and his Sonata in B-Flat (K. 333). (Alice Tully Hall. April 16 at 8.)

Manhattan Chamber Orchestra—Richard Auldon Clark conducts Brahms' Serendade No. 2 (Op. 16), Alan Hovhaness's "Vibration Painting," Morton Gould's "Derivations," and Barber's "Knoxville, Summer of 1915" (featuring soprano Margaret Astrup). (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. April 16 at 8.)

Cathedral of St. John the Divine Choirs—Bruce Fifer directs the cathedral's combined choirs in a Good Friday concert of penitential music: Palestrina's "Stabat Mater," Gregorio Allegri's "Miserere Mei," and Schütz's "The Seven Last Words of Christ" (the last offered in a staged production). Soloists include soprano Rachel Rosales and baritone Wilbur Pauley. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. April 17 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

American Symphony Orchestra—Catherine Comet conducts Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" (in the standard arrangement by Ravel), Schumann's Piano Concerto (with Christopher O'Riley), and the New York première of David Ott's Symphony No. 2. (Carnegie Hall. April 19 at 3.)

New England Symphonic Ensemble—John Rutter conducts the youth orchestra and numerous choristers in Vivaldi's familiar Gloria, as well as in two of his own works. (Carnegie Hall. April 19 at 8.)

RECITALS

N.Y.U. Chamber Music Society—Presenting new music by Arab composers. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 13 at 8.)

Chelsea Chamber Ensemble—The ensemble presents a little-known "Interlude" for Oboe and Strings (1936) by Gerald Finzi in addition to Dohnányi's Sextet and Dvořák's D-Minor Serenade. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. April 13 at 8.)

Pedro Burmester—In the last of three concerts spotlighting talented pianists who have not met with success in high-profile competitions, Mr. Burmester (a Portuguese pianist who failed to progress to the finals of the 1989 Van Cliburn International Competition) performs a program of variations: Mozart's Variations on "Ah! vous dirai-je, maman!" (K. 300e, on a melody known to English-speakers as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"); Beethoven's "Thirty-two Variations in C Minor," (WoO 80); and Bach's "Goldberg" Variations. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. April 14 at 8.)... **NOTE:** Members of the audience may remain for a post-concert panel discussion on the pluses and minuses of piano competitions, with Mr. Burmester, pianist William Wolfram, Seymour Lipkin (director of the "mainstream" William Kapell Competition), David Pocock (who runs the iconoclastic competition of the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, held in Kalamazoo), and Joseph Horowitz (who organized the "Goldfingers" series).

S.E.M. Ensemble—Presenting "early music" of the electronic age: a reconstruction of a 1956 concert of the Cologne Electronic Music Studio, including pieces by Stockhausen, Krenek, and others. (Paula Cooper gallery, 155 Wooster St. April 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-718 243-0964.)

Aysegul Durakoglu—In her New York début recital, the Turkish pianist will perform works by Shostakovich, Schumann (his "Kreisleriana"), Chopin (his B-Minor Sonata), and the Turkish-American composer Kamran Ince. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 15 at 8.)

Jeffrey Siegel—The pianist offers commentary on the piano music of Copland and Bernstein, as well as performances of their works (including the former's "Piano Variations" and the ten of the latter's "Anniversaries"). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. April 15 at 8.)

Juilliard String Quartet—Playing Mozart: three quartets and (with violist Nobuko Imai) the G-Minor Quintet. (Alice Tully Hall. April 15 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Pianist Albert Kim performs Schumann's "Kinderszenen"; violinist Ik-Hwan Bae joins him in Beethoven's "Spring" Sonata; and cellist Christopher Costanza completes the ensemble required for Beethoven's G-Major Piano Trio (Op. 1, No. 2). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. April 16 at 7:30 and April 19 at 4.)

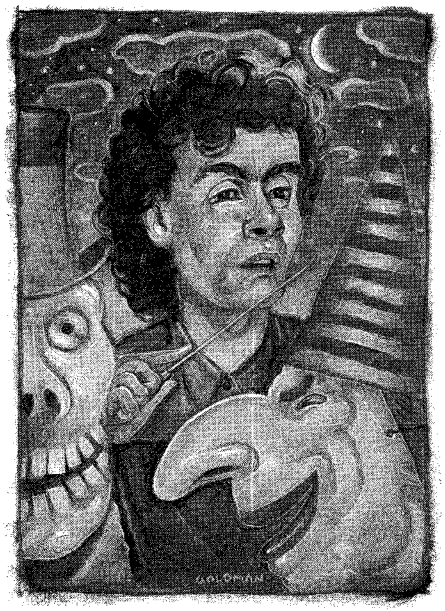
Musicians from Marlboro—Performing a Mozart divertimento, Schoenberg's String Trio (Op. 45), and Dvořák's G-Major String Quintet (Op. 77). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. April 16 at 8.)

Essential Music—Presenting much music by John Cage, from his first two pieces (unplayed since their première, in 1932) to such later pieces as a work for handclappers, written for Henry and Sidney Cowell. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. April 16 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

New York Philomusica Ensemble—The chamber group presents Beethoven's Piano Trio in E-Flat (Op. 70, No. 2), Hummel's D-Minor Septet (Op. 74, for piano, winds, and strings), and the première of John Harbison's "Mottetti de Montale" (featuring mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt). (Merkin Concert Hall. April 16 at 8.)

Hsin/Chen/Long Trio—Violinist Ming-feng Hsin, cellist Chien-an Chen, and pianist Beatrice Long perform trios by Haydn, Mendelssohn (in D Minor, Op. 49), and Brahms (in C Major, Op. 87). (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., Concourse Level 2. April 17-18 at 7:30 and April 19 at 2. For information about tickets, call 373-1850.)

Haydn's "Seven Last Words of Christ"—If it's Easter, you can bet that violinist Alexander Schneider will oversee a performance of Haydn's remarkable string-quartet setting of the "Seven Last Words of Christ." This unusual composition began life, in 1787, as an orchestral work to be played during the Good Friday service of the Cádiz Cathedral, its succession of slow movements separating the bishop's seven ruminations on the subject at hand, and its conclusion quaintly illustrating an earthquake. Haydn later rearranged the piece twice: once for string quartet (which he published as his Op. 51) and once for chorus. Joining Mr. Schneider this year are violinist Isidore Cohen, violist Steven Tenenbom, cellist Laurence Lesser, and Schuyler Chapin (who will serve as narrator). (New School Auditorium, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5689. April 19 at 2.)



Simon Rattle, conducting the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Roy Eaton—He's a Shiatsu therapist and a transcendental-meditation Siddha, as well as an advertising executive and a concert pianist; and, art here reflecting life, Mr. Eaton's eclectic musical programs are not entirely untinged by "New Age" proclivities. In this recital, following pieces by Bach, Mozart, and Adolphus Hailstork (a première), the pianist will offer what he calls "The Meditative Chopin," consisting of a prelude, waltz, nocturne, and sonata (the B-Flat Minor) by that composer, arranged into an uninterrupted medley to induce spiritual introspection. For those so inclined. (Alice Tully Hall. April 19 at 3:30.)

Pinchas Zukerman—The violinist is joined by a half dozen colleagues in chamber music by Brahms (his G-Major Sextet) and Mozart (his E-Flat-Major Piano Quartet and G-Minor String Quintet). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. April 20 at 8.)

Cosmopolitan Chamber Players—Violinist Eric Grossman, cellist Daniel Gaisford, and pianist Sandra Rivers include in their program chamber music by Mendelssohn, Prokofiev, and Barber. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 20 at 8.)

New Music Consort—Presenting New York premières of works by Charles Wuorinen, Anne LeBaron, and Oliver Lake, as well as Penderecki's String Quartet No. 2, written in 1968. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. April 20 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Edith Chen—In her New York début recital, the pianist performs music by Haydn, Beethoven (his A-Major Sonata, Op. 101), Schumann, Rachmaninoff, and Prokofiev (his Sonata No. 6). (Weill Recital Hall. April 20 at 8.)

Da Capo Chamber Players—Presenting chamber works by the 1991 Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Shulamit Ran, including the New York première of "Inscription," for solo violin. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 21 at 8.). . . **note:** Ms. Ran will be on hand for a pre-concert talk, open to ticketholders, beginning at 7:15.

Neal Ramsay—Saxophonist, performing works by Pierre Max Dubois, Burnet Tuthill, and others; with the assistance of pianist Ann Newton and the Nashville Children's Choir. (Weill Recital Hall. April 21 at 8.)

Beaux Arts Trio—Performing an all-Mozart program: two trios (in B-Flat Major, K. 502, and in D Minor, K. 442) and the E-Flat-Major Piano Quartet (in which violist Lawrence Dutton will assist). (Alice Tully Hall. April 22 at 8.)

Stony Brook Contemporary Chamber Players—Presenting four premières. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 22 at 8.)

Manhattan Contemporary Ensemble—Claire Heldrich directs works by Susan Botti, David Noon, and J. Vicent Egea (a première), as well as Peter Maxwell Davies' "Eight Songs for a Mad King" (featuring bass Nicholas Solomon). (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. April 22 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Sounds of Blackness

JAZZ/POP/ROCK
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Sounds of Blackness—After an album produced by Janet Jackson maestros Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, Sounds of Blackness's gospel funk has become amazingly popular (even MTV played their dance hit "The Pressure Pt. 1"). This congregation has within it singers who possess the skill and personality to wring great emotion from every hallelujah without ever sounding trite or sentimental. Meanwhile, the band percolates along, operating keyboards and samplers with dexterity and imagination. It's gospel with a technobeat. Testify. (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. April 17-18 at 7 and 11.)

Little Village—A legendary session drummer (Jim Keltner), an amazing slide guitarist (Ry Cooder), and two singer-songwriters who have still not received the commercial success they deserve (Nick Lowe and John Hiatt) all play together on what could be described as a collaborative project. This band of forty-somethings has an album, "Little Village," that misses the magic of their work on John Hiatt's classic, "Bring the Family," though it manages to be a toe-tapping affair just the same. If some of these guys dig into their back catalogue (Lowe's is the strongest), this concert could be a winning evening. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. April 22 at 8.)

The Sugarcubes—Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. April 17 at 8.

Yvonne Constant—In a tribute to Yves Montand. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. April 20 at 8:45.)

Skid Row—With Pantera. (Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. April 22 at 8.)

Benefit Concert—Clark Terry, Milt Hinton, Doc Cheatham, Jane Jarvis, and others celebrate Lionel Hampton's eighty-fourth birthday. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. April 20 at 7:30. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Yankees—Vs. the Cleveland Indians, April 17 at 7:30, April 18-19 at 1:30, and April 20 at 1.

Mets—Vs. the Philadelphia Phillies, April 13-15 at 7:40. . . . ¶ Vs. the St. Louis Cardinals, April 21-22 at 7:40 and April 23 at 1:40.

Knicks—Vs. the Washington Bullets, April 14 at 7:30.

Nets—Vs. the Indiana Pacers, April 16. . . . ¶ Vs. the Orlando Magic, April 18. (Game time, 7:30.)

Hockey—As of press time, the N.H.L. players' strike had effectively cancelled the post season.

(The Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 293-6000; the Mets at Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499; the Knicks at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; and the Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

Horses—At Aqueduct: Daily, except April 19, at 1. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8 and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Easter Bonnets—About seventy-five Broadway and Off Broadway actors, dancers, and singers—including Richard Dreyfuss, Gene Hackman, and Elizabeth McGovern—will model seasonal headgear in a competition whose proceeds benefit Broadway Cares and Equity Fights AIDS. (Palace Theatre, Broadway at 47th St. April 14 at 4 and April 15 at 5. Tickets are available at the theatre box office.). . . **note:** The bonnets themselves will be on display at the Marriott Marquis, Broadway at 45th St., through April 13.

Cars—The New York International Automobile Show will be held April 18-26 at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center. More than a thousand cars will be on view, including luxury sedans, performance coupés, concept sports cars, and a Japanese-made vehicle with a hydrogen-powered Wankel engine. (Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 8, and Sundays 11 to 10:30. Tickets at the door.)

Sidewalk Cracks—An unusual walking tour, in which (Wildman) Steve Brill explores the plants that grow on the streets of Greenwich Village. Sponsored by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. (April 21 at 4. For reservations, call 924-3895.)

Readings—April 16 at 6: Gwendolyn Brooks reads from her own poetry. (Schomburg Center, 515 Lenox Ave., at 135th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ April 16 at 7: Galway Kinnell reads from the poetry of Walt Whitman. (Poets House, 72 Spring St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ April 16 at 8: Allan Gurganus reads from his own prose. (Three Lives & Co., 154 W. 10th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ April 20 at 8: Jayne Anne Phillips and Gish Jen read from their own fiction. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.)

Talks—April 16 at 8: Susan Sontag is interviewed by Robert Walsh. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . . ¶ April 20 at 8: Marina Budhos, Grace Paley, Katha Pollitt, and Kate Rushin talk about the future of women's writing. (Y.W.C.A., 610 Lexington Ave., at 53rd St. No tickets necessary.)

Memoranda—Passover begins at sundown on April 17. . . . ¶ Good Friday is April 17. . . . ¶ Easter is April 19. (The Parks Department is sponsoring its annual Easter Egg Hunt and Egg Roll for kiddies starting at 10 a.m. in the ball fields of the North Meadow, near 100th St.). . . ¶ Earth Day is April 22.

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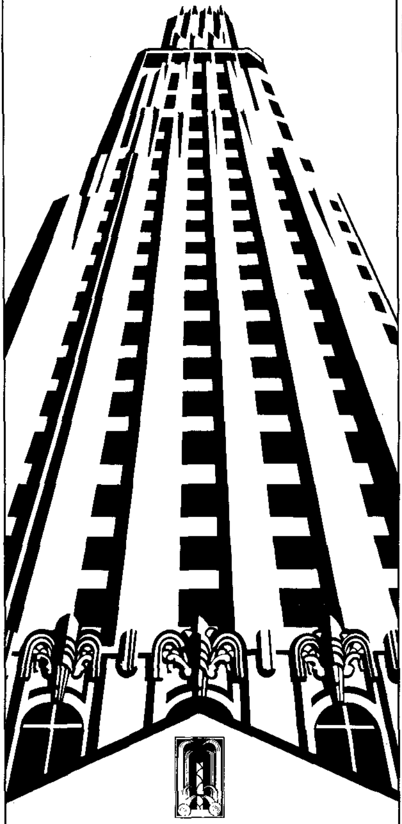

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 24.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Edward II" (directed by Derek Jarman).
Theatre 2: "Mediterraneo" (Gabriele Salvatores, in Italian).
Theatre 3: "Mississippi Masala" (†).
Theatre 4: "Where Angels Fear to Tread" (Charles Sturridge), with Helena Bonham Carter, Judy Davis, Rupert Graves, Giovanni Guidelli, Barbara Jefford, and Helen Mirren.
Theatre 5: "Roadside Prophets" (Abbe Wool), with John Doe and Adam Horovitz.
Theatre 6: "Proof" (Jocelyn Moorhouse).

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through April 16: "Mississippi Mermaid" (1970, François Truffaut; in French), with Jean-Paul Belmondo and Catherine Deneuve.
From April 17: "The Bride Wore Black" (1968, François Truffaut; in French), with Jeanne Moreau; and "The Story of Adèle H." (1975, Truffaut; in French), with Isabelle Adjani.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest" (Bill Kroyer), an animated film.
Theatre 2: "Basic Instinct" (†).
Theatre 3: "My Cousin Vinny" (†).

Loews Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "Complex World" (James Wolpaw).
Theatre 2: "Wayne's World" (†).
Theatre 3: "Shadows and Fog" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Mambo Kings" (†).
Theatre 5: "Thunderheart" (†).
Theatre 6: Through April 14: "Ladybugs" (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield. From April 15: "Deep Cover" (Bill Duke), with Larry Fishburne and Jeff Goldblum.
Theatre 7: "The Power of One" (†).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris), with Brian Krause, Mädchen Amick, and Alice Krige.
Theatre 2: "Othello" (1952, Orson Welles), with Welles.
Theatre 3: "Daughters of the Dust" (1991, Julie Dash).
Theatre 4: "Newsies" (Kenny Ortega), with Christian Bale, Bill Pullman, Ann-Margret, and Robert Duvall.
Theatre 5: Through April 16: "Sleepwalkers." From April 17: "The Hours and Times" (Christopher Münch), with Ian Hart and David Angus.
Theatre 6: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).
Theatre 7: "Straight Talk" (Barnet Kellman), with Dolly Parton and James Woods.

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Basic Instinct" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Lawnmower Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.
Theatre 3: Through April 16: "The Prince of Tides" (†). From April 17: "Brain Donors" (Dennis Dugan), with John Turturro, Bob Nelson, and Mel Smith.
Theatre 4: "Basic Instinct" (†).
Theatre 5: "JFK" (†).
Theatre 6: "Bugsy" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Rock-A-Doodle" (Don Bluth), an animated film.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
Through April 16: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).
From April 17: "The Babe" (Arthur Hiller), with John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, and Bruce Boxleitner.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "Beethoven" (Brian Levant), with Charles Grodin.
Theatre 2: "Straight Talk" (Barnet Kellman), with Dolly Parton and James Woods.
Theatre 3: "Newsies" (Kenny Ortega), with Christian Bale, Bill Pullman, Ann-Margret, and Robert Duvall.
Theatre 4: "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: Through April 16: "Wayne's World" (†). From April 17: "Brain Donors" (Dennis Dugan), with John Turturro, Bob Nelson, and Mel Smith.
Theatre 2: "Basic Instinct" (†).
Theatre 3: "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris), with Brian Krause, Mädchen Amick, and Alice Krige.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"My Cousin Vinny" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"Bugsy" (†).

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "Straight Talk" (Barnet Kellman), with Dolly Parton and James Woods.
Theatre 2: "Newsies" (Kenny Ortega), with Christian Bale, Bill Pullman, Ann-Margret, and Robert Duvall.

Crown Gotham, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"My Cousin Vinny" (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Where Angels Fear to Tread" (Charles Sturridge), with Helena Bonham Carter, Judy Davis, Rupert Graves, Giovanni Guidelli, Barbara Jefford, and Helen Mirren.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).
Theatre 2: Through April 14: "White Men Can't Jump" (†). From April 15: "Deep Cover" (Bill Duke), with Larry Fishburne and Jeff Goldblum.

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"The Lawnmower Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: Through April 16: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (†). From April 17: "City of Joy" (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.
Theatre 2: Through April 16: "The Power of One" (†). From April 17: "The Babe" (Arthur Hiller), with John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, and Bruce Boxleitner.

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).
Theatre 2: "Lovers" (Vicente Aranda, in Spanish), with Victoria Abril, Jorge Sanz, and Maribel Verdu.
Theatre 3: "Hear My Song" (†).

Art East Cinema, 1st Ave. at 61th. (644-1111)
"Europa Europa" (†).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: "Beethoven" (Brian Levant), with Charles Grodin.
Theatre 2: "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.
Theatre 3: "Thunderheart" (†).
Theatre 4: (Matinées only) "Rock-A-Doodle" (Don Bluth), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris), with Brian Krause, Mädchen Amick, and Alice Krige.
Theatre 5: "FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest" (Bill Kroyer), an animated film.
Theatre 6: "Sleepwalkers."

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "JFK" (†).
Theatre 2: "Basic Instinct" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"The Player" (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: Through April 16: "Wayne's World" (†). From April 17: "Brain Donors" (Dennis Dugan), with John Turturro, Bob Nelson, and Mel Smith.
Theatre 2: "The Mambo Kings" (†).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Mediterraneo" (Gabriele Salvatores, in Italian).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Shadows and Fog" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
Through April 16: "Ladybugs" (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield.
From April 17: "Brain Donors" (Dennis Dugan), with John Turturro, Bob Nelson, and Mel Smith.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).
Theatre 2: Through April 16: "Beethoven" (Brian Levant), with Charles Grodin. From April 17: "The Babe" (Arthur Hiller), with John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, and Bruce Boxleitner.

Loews Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: "The Mambo Kings" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.
Theatre 3: "Basic Instinct" (†).
Theatre 4: (Matinées only) "Rock-A-Doodle" (Don Bluth), an animated film; and (evenings only) "The Power of One" (†).
Theatre 5: "FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest" (Bill Kroyer), an animated film.
Theatre 6: "Thunderheart" (†).
Theatre 7: "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris), with Brian Krause, Mädchen Amick, and Alice Krige.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "Newsies" (Kenny Ortega), with Christian Bale, Bill Pullman, Ann-Margret, and Robert Duvall.
Theatre 2: Through April 14: "Straight Talk" (Barnet Kellman), with Dolly Parton and James Woods. From April 15: "Deep Cover" (Bill Duke), with Larry Fishburne and Jeff Goldblum.

WEST SIDE

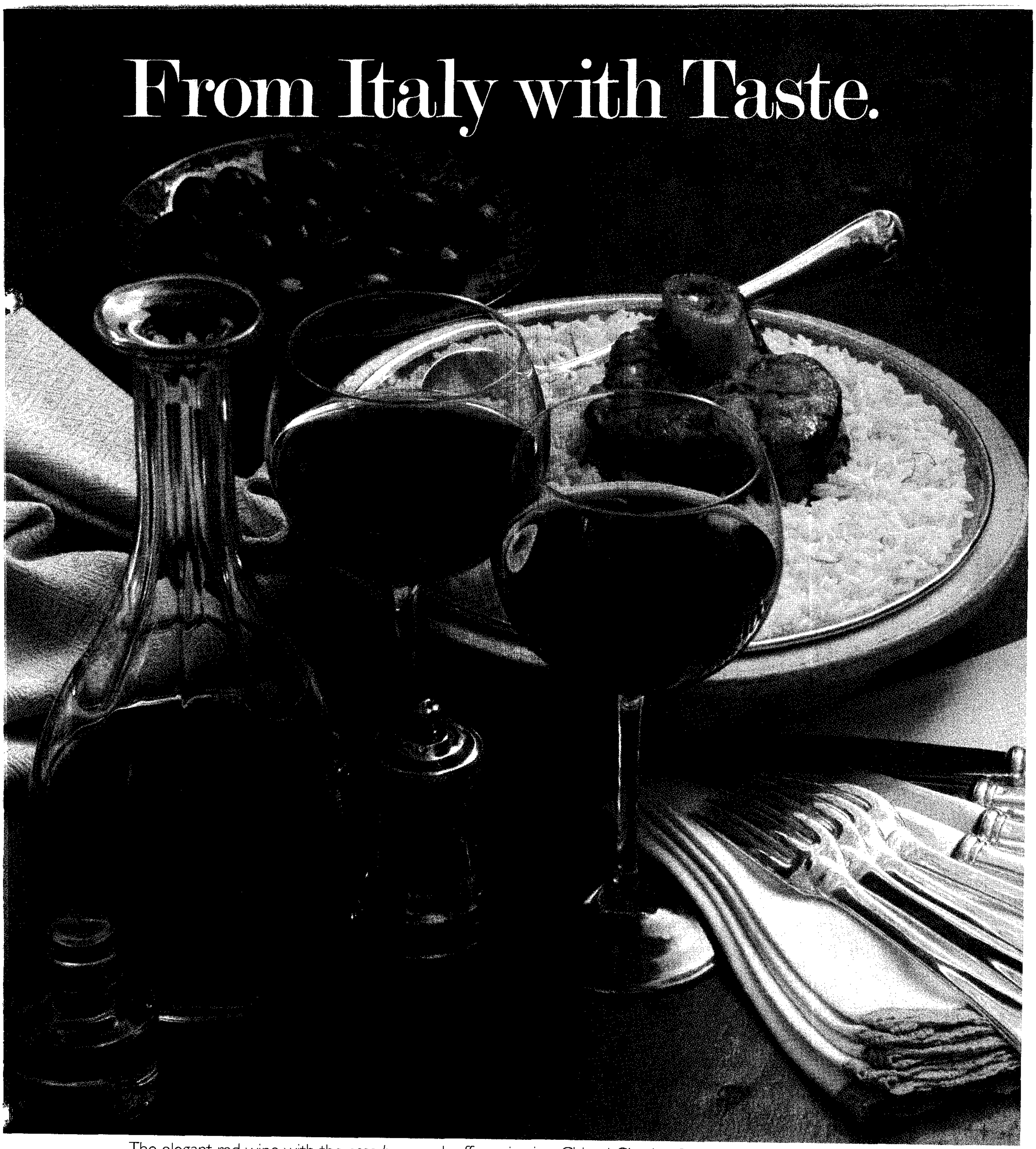
Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through April 21: "Rock Soup" (1991, directed by Lech Kowalski). From April 22: "Iron Man" (1989, Shinya Tsukamoto; in Japanese).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "Mindwalk" (Bernt Capra), with Liv Ullmann, Sam Waterston, and John Heart.

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: Through April 16: "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly. From April 17: "Brain Donors" (Dennis Dugan), with John Turturro, Bob Nelson, and Mel Smith.
Theatre 2: Through April 16: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (†). From April 17: "The Babe" (Arthur Hiller), with John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, and Bruce Boxleitner.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Beethoven" (Brian Levant), with Charles Grodin.
Theatre 2: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "The Restless Conscience" (Hava Kohav Beller), a documentary.
Theatre 2: "Europa Europa" (†).
Theatre 3: (Separate admissions) "The Double Life of Véronique" (Krzysztof Kieslowski; in French and Polish), with Irène Jacob and Philippe Volter; and "American Dream" (†).
Theatre 4: "In the Shadow of the Stars" (Irving Saraf and Allie Light).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris), with Brian Krause, Mädchen Amick, and Alice Krige.
Theatre 2: "My Cousin Vinny" (†).
Theatre 3: "Beethoven" (Brian Levant), with Charles Grodin.
Theatre 4: Through April 16: "My Cousin Vinny" (†). From April 17: "The Babe" (Arthur Hiller), with John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, and Bruce Boxleitner.
Theatre 5: "FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest" (Bill Kroyer), an animated film.
Theatre 6: Through April 14: "Straight Talk" (Barnet Kellman), with Dolly Parton and James Woods. From April 15: "Deep Cover" (Bill Duke), with Larry Fishburne and Jeff Goldblum.
Theatre 7: "Thunderheart" (†).
Theatre 8: "The Player" (†).



The elegant red wine with the *osso buco* and saffron rice is a Chianti Classico from Tuscany. We could as easily have chosen a Torgiano from Umbria or a Donnas from Valle d'Aosta. After all, the 20 regions of Italy produce more varieties of fine wine than any other country. And they go with any foods in America.

VINO

Italian Wines. The Quality of Life.

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The **OHIO PLAYERS** are here April 17-18. These masters of seventies funk and titillating album covers have lost their edge over the years. They're skilled musicians, given to sweaty, spiralling jams. But their shows can be a bit too slick. Their renditions of such hits as "Fire" and "Skin Tight" sound rather perfunctory, and the frequent "Can I hear you say yeah!" exhortations ring hollow. Shows at nine and eleven.

TRAMPS, 45 W. 21st St. (727-3088)—Thanks to low lighting, muralled pillars, ironwork, and a beautifully restored old tin ceiling, this loft space manages to feel homey. The sound system can be overwhelming, but the place is big enough to accommodate both those who want to lose their hearing and those who don't. Zydeco, soul, blues, and rock are the main order of business here. Bluesman **JOHNNY COPELAND** performs on April 18. Sets at eight and eleven weeknights, eight-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—This windowless, slice-of-pie-shaped basement has an illustrious history that embraces everyone from Judy Holliday to Lenny Bruce, from Pete Seeger and Leadbelly to Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. The décor is homey and a little faded, like an attic full of memorabilia. **BUTCH MORRIS'S** ensemble holds forth April 14-19, and **TERENCE BLANCHARD'S** quintet begins work on April 21. Mondays are reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA.** Music after nine-thirty.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in the Summer of Love-muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen-bus curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. **NEW RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE** appear on April 16, and **BOP HARVEY** shows up on April 17. **FAMILY STAND,** which will be here on April 18, is a soulful, seventies-ish collective that puts on a tight, horn-happy show. **JEAN-PAUL BOURELLY** appears on the same bill. Music at ten.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. The food is Italian, the atmosphere is pastels and soft lights, and the musicians, who set up in a room between the bar and the dining room, are first-rate. **ROGER KELLAWAY** and **JAY LEONHART** perform April 13-18, and **KIRK LIGHTSEY** and **CECIL MC BEE** begin work on April 20. Music from eight.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

RINGLING BROTHERS AND BARNUM & BAILEY CIRCUS—The hundred-and-twenty-second version of The Greatest Show on Earth. (Madison Square Garden. Through May 3. For information about show times and tickets, call 465-6000.)

THE EASTER SHOW—One of Radio City Music Hall's annual extravaganzas. With the Rockettes. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. Through April 23. For information about show times and tickets, call 247-4777.)

1992 TOUR OF WORLD FIGURE SKATING CHAMPIONS—Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. April 18 at 1.

"OH DARN, THE WORLD IS A DANGEROUS PLACE FOR LITTLE BUTTERCUPS"—A performance piece by Maureen Angelos and Dominique Dibell. On a double bill with a piece by Lisa Lerner. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. April 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 925-4671.)

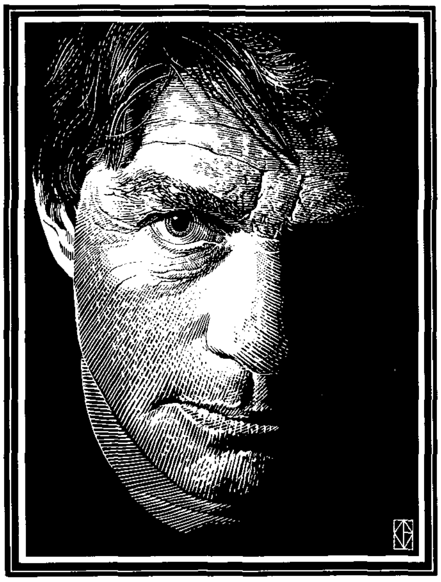
"QUINTLAND (THE MUSICAL)"—A solo performance piece by Dan Hurlin about the Dionne quintuplets. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. April 15-18 at 8 and April 19 at 3. Through April 26.)

"JO HA KYU"—A collaboration between composer Tan Dun and choreographer Yoshiko Chuma. (La Mama Annex, 66 E. 4th St. 475-7710. April 16-19 at 7:30.)

"BRACE UP!"—A production by the Wooster Group, which includes text from "The Three Sisters," by Chekhov. With Kate Valk, Peyton Smith, Anna Kohler, and Jeff Webster. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. April 16-19 at 8. Through April 25.)

CARMELITA TROPICANA—In "Brave New Worlds." Directed by Uzi Parnes. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 16-19 at 8. Through May 3.)

"THE (HAUNTED) HOUSE"—A chamber opera by John Moran. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. April 16-18 at 10.)



Allan McCollum

ART

RAY SMITH's paintings are handsome and robust (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene Street; through April 25). The artist paints on linen or wood in rich, opaque oil pigments, sometimes using wax and various collage elements. Smith, who was born in Brownsville, Texas, now lives in New York and Cuernavaca, Mexico, and his flexible cast of fantastical figures evokes the vitality of his adopted country. The artist's grand, comic bestiary is full of self-portraits and portraits of his wife, of creatures part human and part beast, of personified animals and mutant mortals. It is also a tribute, in some sense, to the Hispanic presence in modern art. Smith's compositions, for instance, seem to allude to Picabia's ambivalent, erotic palimpsests—and thereby, also, to Sigmar Polke, David Salle, and Francesco Clemente. His displays of satiric ardor and creative profligacy recall both Diego Rivera and Picasso and suggest a sort of temperamental twirl of the cape.

Smith tends to be facile, as technically talented people often do; a style of juxtaposed and overlapping imagery is itself a license to be glib. A few of the paintings in this show of recent work seem schematic, as if they had been filled in rather than experienced. "Pintura Espirituala," which depicts four quizzical donkeys, each gripping a bottle of hooch in its teeth, is one such picture. But when Smith looks inside and out front, rather than sidewise, upward, or behind, he can be wonderful. "Baño Turco," for example, a vibrant triptych in the smaller gallery space, is a great big splashy treat.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—A retrospective of black-and-white and color photographs by Helen Levitt. Through June 28. . . . ¶ Barbizon, in the Forest of Fontainebleau, was a meeting place and inspiration for several French landscape painters in the eighteen-fifties and sixties. A large sampling of works by these artists—Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, and others—is on view. Through May 10. . . . ¶ Fifty works by William Harnett (1848-92), an Irish-American painter who was the father of the trompe-l'oeil school. Through June 14. . . . ¶ The recent donation of the Perls collection—a hundred and sixty-three objects from the kingdom of Benin—has substantially redefined the museum's African holdings. This exhibition of the collection is a welcome relief from the rigid theatre of many of the museum's blockbusters: it enables viewers to make their own discoveries. . . . ¶ "American Rococo, 1750-1775." Furniture, silver, paintings, engravings, ceramics, and glass made in pre-Revolutionary America. Through May 17. . . . ¶ "The Lotus Transcendent." The Eilenberg collection, from which this show has been selected, is not particularly comprehensive nor focussed on grand masterpieces, but it does sparkle in many unexpected ways. For instance, it includes a group of bronze sculptures from Indonesia that many consider to be the finest privately assembled collection of such material in the world. Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing," two hundred works by forty American and European artists. Through May 5. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until late spring.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Terry Winters, who is in his early forties, is a very good, serious painter of organic forms in earthy pigments. His work develops slowly, rather ponderously at times, and might be marvellously well represented by a strictly edited, fast-paced exhibition of, say, fifteen to twenty paintings from the past decade, and a more copious array, perhaps, of works on paper. The Whitney, however, apparently in blithe ignorance of the nature of Winters' endeavor and appeal, has instead mounted a turgid exhibition of more than a hundred paintings and drawings and thirty prints. If this artist's work and reputation weren't so damn solid, this show might do him in. Through May 10. . . . ¶ A well-framed, expertly installed, compact exhibition of recent "Pastels" by Joan Mitchell. They're beautiful: vibrant, nimble, and utterly authoritative, though seemingly unfettered. Mitchell is in peak form here. Through June 21. . . . ¶ A retrospective of photographs by Paul Strand. Through May 17. . . . ¶ The William Wegman retrospective—of two hundred drawings, paintings, videos, and photographs—offers a comprehensive view of Wegman's skills and of his perceptions of art and the world. Through April 19. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—Seventy "Destructions," "Accumulations," and "Cachets" by the inimitable French Nouveau Réaliste Arman. Through April 26. (For gallery shows of works by Arman, see Short List—57th Street Area.). . . ¶ "The New Merengue," an installation by sculptor Houston Conwill, poet Estella Conwill Majozo, and architect Joseph De Pace. Through May 3. . . . ¶ "Contemporary Wood Sculpture" includes works by Kenji Fujita, Jane Greengold, and Louise Nevelson, among others. Through June 7. . . . ¶ "Biomorphicism and Organic Abstraction in Twentieth-Century Decorative Arts." (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

ASIA SOCIETY, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"The Cosmic Dancer." The tenth-century Hindu bronze of Shiva Nataraja, Lord of the Dance, is the centerpiece of this exhibition of fifty bronze, stone, and wood sculptures from India and Southeast Asia. Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Bridges and Boundaries: African-Americans and American Jews." This show—comprising three hundred and fifty art works, photographs, and documents—explores the complex relationship of coöperation and tension between the two groups. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays, except April 19, 11 to 5; Thursdays, 11 to 8; Fridays, except April 17, 11 to 3. Closes at 1 on April 17.)

Theatre 9: “The Cutting Edge” (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: “White Men Can't Jump” (†).
Theatre 2: “White Men Can't Jump” (†).
Theatre 3: “Newsies” (Kenny Ortega), with Christian Bale, Bill Pullman, Ann-Margret, and Robert Duvall.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
Through April 18: “Beauty and the Beast” (†).
From April 19: “Brenda Starr” (Robert Ellis Miller), with Brooke Shields, Diana Scarwid, and Timothy Dalton.

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: “The Cutting Edge” (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) “Rock-A-Doodle” (Don Bluth), an animated film; and (evenings only) “JFK” (†).
Theatre 3: “Edward II” (Derek Jarman).
Theatre 4: “The Prince of Tides” (†).
Theatre 5: “FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest” (Bill Kroyer), an animated film.
Theatre 6: “Beethoven” (Brian Levant), with Charles Grodin.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
Through April 14: “Thunderheart” (†).
From April 15: “City of Joy” (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
“Casablanca” (1942, Michael Curtiz), with Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
“Othello” (1952, Orson Welles), with Welles.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: “Mississippi Masala” (†).
Theatre 2: “Under Suspicion” (Simon Moore), with Liam Neeson and Laura San Giacomo.

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
“Howards End” (James Ivory), with Anthony Hopkins, Vanessa Redgrave, Helena Bonham Carter, Emma Thompson, and James Wilby

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
“The Mambo Kings” (†).

Loews Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
“Shadows and Fog” (†).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
“Beethoven” (Brian Levant), with Charles Grodin.

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: “Raise the Red Lantern” (Zhang Yimou; in Chinese).
Theatre 2: “Toto le Heros” (Jaco Van Dormael; in French), with Michel Bouquet and Mireille Perrier.
Theatre 3: “Delicatessen” (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, in French), with Dominique Pinon and Marie-Laure Dougnac.

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
Through April 16: “Fried Green Tomatoes” (†).
From April 17: “The Babe” (Arthur Hiller), with John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, and Bruce Boxleitner.

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: Through April 16: “Wayne's World” (†). From April 17: “Brain Donors” (Dennis Dugan), with John Turturro, Bob Nelson, and Mel Smith.
Theatre 2: “Thunderheart” (†).
Theatre 3: “Basic Instinct” (†).
Theatre 4: “Newsies” (Kenny Ortega), with Christian Bale, Bill Pullman, Ann-Margret, and Robert Duvall.
Theatre 5: “The Power of One” (†).
Theatre 6: “Sleepwalkers” (Mick Garris), with Brian Krause, Mädchen Amick, and Alice Krige.

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: “My Cousin Vinny” (†).
Theatre 2: “FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest” (Bill Kroyer), an animated film.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: “White Men Can't Jump” (†).
Theatre 2: Through April 14: (Matinées only) “Rock-A-Doodle” (Don Bluth), an animated film; and (evenings only) “The Cutting Edge” (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly. From April 15: “Deep Cover” (Bill Duke), with Larry Fishburne and Jeff Goldblum.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: “My Cousin Vinny” (†).
Theatre 2: “My Cousin Vinny” (†).
Theatre 3: Through April 14: “The Power of One” (†). From April 15: “Deep Cover” (directed by Bill Duke), with Larry Fishburne and Jeff Goldblum.
Theatre 4: “Basic Instinct” (†).
Theatre 5: “The Lawnmower Man” (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan.
Theatre 6: “Basic Instinct” (†).
Theatre 7: “White Men Can't Jump” (†).

John Goodman in “The Babe”

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
Through April 16: “Newsies” (Kenny Ortega), with Christian Bale, Bill Pullman, Ann-Margret, and Robert Duvall.
From April 17: “Brain Donors” (Dennis Dugan), with John Turturro, Bob Nelson, and Mel Smith.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: “Wayne's World” (†).
Theatre 2: “Straight Talk” (Barnet Kellman), with Dolly Parton and James Woods.
Theatre 3: “Ladybugs” (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield.

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
“Sleepwalkers” (Mick Garris), with Brian Krause, Mädchen Amick, and Alice Krige.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: “FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest” (Bill Kroyer), an animated film.
Theatre 2: Through April 16: “Beethoven” (Brian Levant), with Charles Grodin. From April 17: “The Babe” (Arthur Hiller), with John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, and Bruce Boxleitner.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Le Cinematographe, 15 Vandam St. (675-4680)
Through April 16: Films by Chantal Akerman.
From April 17: “Window Shopping” (1992, directed by Chantal Akerman; in French).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
April 13: “Carmen” (1983, Carlos Saura; in Spanish), with Antonio Gades; and “El Amor Brujo” (1986, Saura; in Spanish).
April 14: “Open Doors” (1991, Gianni Ameio; in Italian); and “Europa Europa” (†).
From April 15: “Liquid Dreams” (1992, Mark Manos).

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Through April 16: “Casablanca” (1942, Michael Curtiz), with Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre.
From April 17: “Beauty and the Beast” (1946, Jean Cocteau; in French), with Jean Marais, Josette Day, Marcel André, and Michel Auclair; and “Un Chien Andalou” (†).

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
April 13: “La Grande Illusion” (1937, Jean Renoir; in French), with Erich von Stroheim, Jean Gabin, Pierre Fresnay, and Marcel Dalio; and “La Bête Humaine” (1938, Renoir; in French), with Gabin, Simone Simon, and Renoir himself.
April 14: “Desire” (1936, Frank Borzage), with Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper, John Halliday, and William Frawley; and “A Foreign Affair” (1948, Billy Wilder), with Jean Arthur, Dietrich, and John Lund.
April 15: “Kamikaze '89” (1982, Wolf Gremm; in German), with Rainer Werner Fassbinder; and “Nosferatu, the Vampyre” (1979, Werner Herzog; in German), with Klaus Kinski, Isabelle Adjani, and Bruno Ganz.
April 16: “North by Northwest” (1959, Alfred Hitchcock), with Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint and James Mason; and “I Confess” (1953, Hitchcock), with Montgomery Clift, Anne Baxter, Karl Malden, and Brian Aherne.
April 17-18: “The Philadelphia Story” (1940, George Cukor), with Katharine Hepburn, James Stewart, Cary Grant, and Ruth Hussey; and “Bringing Up Baby” (1938, Howard Hawks), with Hepburn, Grant, and Charles Ruggles.
April 19: “Stolen Kisses” (1968, François Truffaut; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud; and “The Man Who Loved Women” (1977, Truffaut; in French), with Charles Denner, Brigitte Fossey, Nelly Borgeaud, and Leslie Caron.
April 20: “Diabolique” (see page 26); and “Panique” (†).
April 21: “Zelig” (†); and “A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy” (1982, Woody Allen), with Allen, Mia Farrow, José Ferrer, Julie Hagerty, Tony Roberts, and Mary Steenburgen.
April 22: “Key Largo” (1948, John Huston), with Humphrey Bogart, Edward G. Robinson, Lauren Bacall, Lionel Barrymore, and Claire Trevor; and “The Treasure of the Sierra Madre” (1948, Huston), with Walter Huston, Bogart, Tim Holt, Alfonso Bedoya, and Robert Blake.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—April 13 at 2:30 and April 19 at 2: “High Hopes” (1988, directed by Mike Leigh), with Philip Davis, Ruth Sheen, and Edna Dore. . . . ¶ April 13 at 6 and April 19 at 5: “Who's Who” (1978, Leigh), with Richard Kane, Joolia Cappleman, and Simon Chandler. . . . ¶ April 13 at 6:30: A program of films by Rose Lowder, who will be present. . . . ¶ April 14 at 2:30 and April 20 at 6: “Life Is Sweet” (1990, Leigh), with Alison Steadman, Jim Broadbent, Claire Skinner, Jane Horrocks, and Timothy Spall. . . . ¶ April 14 at 6: “The Kiss of Death” (1977, Leigh), with David Threlfall, John Wheatley, and Kay Adshead. . . . ¶ April 16 at 2:30: “Four Days in July” (1984, Leigh), with Brid Brennan, Desmond McAleer, and Charles Lawson. . . . ¶ April 16 at 3 and 6: “The Finiteness of Freedom” (1991, Heinz Peter Schwerfer), a documentary. . . . ¶ April 16 at 6 and April 21 at 2:30: “Home Sweet Home” (1982, Leigh), with Timothy Spall, Eric Richard, and Tim Barker. . . . ¶ April 17 at 1:30 and April 19 at 3:30: “The Ten Commandments” (†). . . . ¶ April 17 at 3 and 6: “Abigail's Party” (1977, Leigh), with Alison Steadman, Tim Stern, and Janine Duvitski. . . . ¶ April 17 at 6 and April 18 at 2:30: “Ordet” (1955, Carl Dreyer; in Danish). . . . ¶ April 18 at 2: “Grown-Ups” (1980, Leigh), with Philip Davis, Lesley Manville, and Sam Kelly. . . . ¶ April 18 at 5: “Bleak Moments” (1971, Leigh), with Anne Raitt, Sarah Stephenson, and Eric Allan. . . . ¶ April 18 at 5 and April 19 at 12:30: “The Ten Commandments” (1923, Cecil B. De Mille; silent), with Theodore Roberts, Charles de Roche, and Estelle Taylor. . . . ¶ April 20 at 2:30: “Hard Labour” (1973, Leigh), with Liz Smith, Clifford Kershaw, and Polly Hemingway. . . . ¶ April 21 at 6: “Nuts in May” (1976, Leigh), with Roger Sloman, Alison Steadman, and Anthony O'Donnell.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—April 13 at 2: “To Kill a Mockingbird” (1962, Robert Mulligan), with Gregory Peck, Mary Badham, Philip Alford, Brock Peters, and Robert Duvall. . . . ¶ April 13 at 4:30: “Cape Fear” (1962, J. Lee Thompson), with Peck, Robert Mitchum, and Polly Bergen. . . . ¶ April 13 at 6:30, 8, and 9:30, April 14 at 10, April 15 at 2, 7:30, 9, and 10:30, and April 16 at 8 and 9:30: “The Hours and Times” (1991, Christopher Münch), with Ian Hart and David Angus. . . . ¶ April 14 at 2 and 6 and April 15 at 5:15: “Gentleman's Agreement”

MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

(1947, Elia Kazan), with Peck, Dorothy McGuire, and John Garfield. . . . ¶ April 14 at 4:15 and 8:15 and April 15 at 3:30: "The Gunfighter" (1950, Henry King), with Peck, Millard Mitchell, and Helen Westcott. . . . ¶ April 16 at 2 and 6 and April 17 at 4: "Spellbound" (1945, Alfred Hitchcock), with Ingrid Bergman and Peck. . . . ¶ April 16 at 4 and April 17 at 2 and 6: "Yellow Sky" (1949, William A. Wellman), with Peck, Anne Baxter, and Richard Widmark. . . . ¶ April 17 at 8, April 18 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30, and April 20 at 2 and 4:15: "The Branches of the Tree" (1990, Satyajit Ray). . . . ¶ April 19 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "On the Beach" (1959, Stanley Kramer), with Peck, Ava Gardner, Anthony Perkins, and Fred Astaire. . . . ¶ April 20 at 6:30, April 21 at 4:30 and 9:15, and April 22 at 4:15: "The Macomber Affair" (1947, Zoltán Korda), with Peck, Joan Bennett, and Robert Preston. . . . ¶ April 20 at 9, April 21 at 2 and 6:45, and April 22 at 2: "Duel in the Sun" (1946, King Vidor), with Jennifer Jones, Peck, Joseph Cotten, Lionel Barrymore, and Charles Bickford. . . . ¶ April 22 at 6:45 and 9: "Cool Moon" (1991, Patrick Bouchitey), with Jean-François Stévenin and Bouchitey.

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—A Dennis Potter retrospective. April 16 at 5:30, April 17 at 6, and April 18 at 2:30: "Son of Man" (1969, BBC), with Colin Blakely, Robert Hardy, Bernard Hepton, and Brian Blessed; and "Joe's Ark" (1974, BBC), with Freddie Jones, Angharad Rees, and Christopher Guard.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—"Borders and Barrios: The Chicano in Hollywood Film, 1908-87." April 18 at 2: "Salt of the Earth" (†). . . . ¶ April 18 at 4: "Trial" (1955, Mark Robson), with Glenn Ford, Dorothy McGuire, Arthur Kennedy, and John Hodiak. . . . ¶ April 19 at 2: "Boulevard Nights" (†). . . . ¶ April 19 at 4: "Born in East L.A." (1987, Cheech Marin), with Marin.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—April 17 at 6: "Arsenal" (†). . . . ¶ April 18 at 2: "Earth" (†). . . . ¶ April 18 at 4: A program of films by Francis Lee. . . . ¶ April 18 at 6: A program of Swedish avant-garde films, 1924-90. . . . ¶ April 18 at 8 and 10: "Michael" (1924, Carl Dreyer; silent)

DONNELL LIBRARY CENTER, 20 W. 53rd St. (621-0619)—April 21 at noon: "Page of Madness" (1926, Teinosuke Kinugasa; a Japanese silent film).

ADAM CLAYTON POWELL, JR., STATE OFFICE BUILDING, 163 W. 125th St. (873-5040)—April 16 at 1 and 3:55: "Zou Zou" (1934, Marc Allégret; in French), with Josephine Baker and Jean Gabin; and "Princess Tam Tam" (1935, Edmond T. Gréville; in French), with Baker and Albert Préjean. . . . ¶ April 16 at 6: "Malcolm X: By Any Means Necesary" (1990), "Death of a Prophet: The Last Days in the Life of Malcolm X" (1982, Woodie King, Jr.), and "They Came Before Columbus" (1989, Clemson Brown). . . . ¶ April 17 at 1 and 4:05: "Quilombo" (1984, Carlos Diegues) and "They Came Before Columbus.". . . ¶ April 17 at 6:30: "Redd Foxx: Blacks in Blue Comedy" (1991).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—April 22 at 12:30 and 6: "Let's Make Love" (1960, George Cukor), with Marilyn Monroe and Yves Montand. . . . ¶ April 22 at 3:15 and 8:45: "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever" (1970, Vincente Minnelli), with Montand and Barbra Streisand.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway. (1-718 783-6501)—A program of films directed by Israeli women. April 19 at 2: "The End of the Orange Season" (1989, Lihi Hanoch).

IN BRIEF

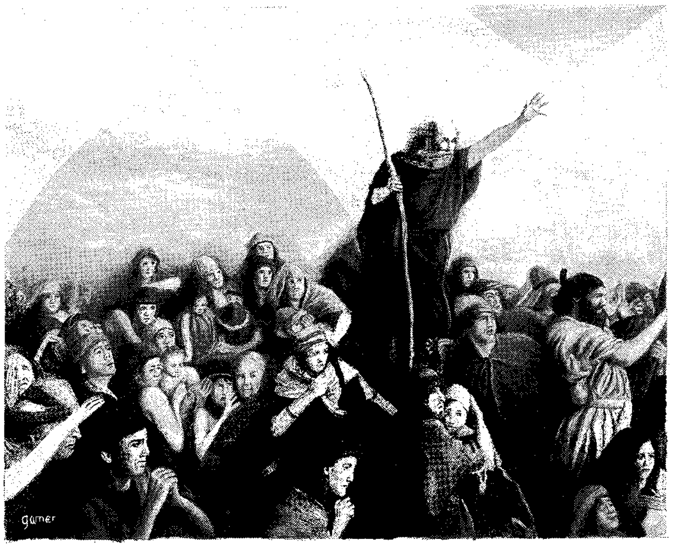
SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

AMERICAN DREAM—Barbara Kopple's documentary, about a strike in a Minnesota meat-packing plant, is a lucid and unfussy piece of movie journalism which manages to be as complexly affecting as a great novel. The story that she tells here is a terrifying one. The workers at the Austin, Minnesota, plant of Geo. A. Hormel & Company decide to go on strike on August 17, 1985, rather than accept a rollback of their wages and benefits. The union, Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, is led by a militant president, Jim Guyette, and a fiery free-lance consultant, Ray Rogers. Together, Guyette and Rogers create a terrific spirit of energy and resolve in the rank and file. But Lewie Anderson, a veteran negotiator for the international union, thinks that their strategy is "doomed." As the strike wears on, our reactions to what we're seeing become more volatile. Our hearts are with the pumped-up rank and file of P-9, but our heads, increasingly (and surprisingly), are with the pragmatic Anderson: his anaylsis of the local's chances against the company proves accurate in virtually every particular. The movie embodies a kind of tragic understanding of American life—tragic in the original and the fullest sense, in which the spectacle of unspeakable calamity produces pity and terror and then an unforeseeable and penetrating clarity. This is a masterpiece of social art. Academy Award for best documentary in 1991.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/92.) (Quad Cinema.)

ARSENAL (1929)—The writer-director Alexander Dovzhenko was the poet of the Russian revolutionary film movement—a poet whose startling imagery had a heat and pitch and lyricism that Eisenstein and Pudovkin never approached. This classic film, set during the war of 1914, is an original and experimental celebration of social revolution. (It ranks just below his great "Earth" of 1930.) Silent.—P.K. (Anthology Film Archives; April 17.)

BASIC INSTINCT—A vicious, grindingly manipulative urban mystery that uses a thick atmosphere of S & M kinkiness to distract the audience from the story's thinness and inanity. Michael Douglas plays a cop with a "dark side." Sharon Stone plays a rich, beautiful bisexual novelist who is the prime suspect in a murder case. He falls in love with her, and the two of them breathe heavily through the rest of the picture. Stone has a few bright moments early on. But our basic instinct as we watch Douglas's strenuous grimaces of sexual transport is to flee the theatre. And the mystery is so ineptly constructed that it's not much fun trying to work out the solution. We sense that the screenwriter, Joe Eszterhas, and the director, Paul Verhoeven, don't have any respect for the genre—that they're too jaded to care about anything but giving us enough voyeuristic jolts to keep us awake. When the picture is over, we realize that the only suspense that it has produced effectively is a weird kind of ideological suspense. Will the movie take its smarmy misogyny all the way, or will it pull back in the end? It goes all the way. Also with George Dzundza and Jeanne Tripplehorn; there's a very peculiar cameo by Dorothy Malone.—T.R. (4/6/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Loews Orpheum VII, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)



At MOMA, "The Ten Commandments" (1923)

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST—It's got storytelling vigor and clarity, bright, eclectic animation, and a frisky musical wit. In this Disney version of the fairy tale, Belle (the voice of Paige O'Hara) is a book-reading French provincial girl—a virtuous sort of Mademoiselle Bovary. She dreams of a Prince Charming but gets more than she bargains for when she becomes hostage to the buffalolike Beast (the surprisingly orotund Robby Benson). Underneath his fang-gnashing glower, he's a prisoner of adolescence—unlike Peter Pan, he wants to grow up. He's the opposite of Belle's lunkheaded village suitor, Gaston (Richard White), a narcissistic macho man. Throughout, the Howard Ashman--Alan Menken score is clever and fluid in the best Lerner and Loewe manner, with flashes of oddball humor that keep everything light and bouncy. (Gaston's theme song trumps "C'est Moi," from "Camelot.") There's a great cast of supporting utensils at the Beast's enchanted castle, led by Jerry Orbach in an ebullient vocal turn as the Chevalier-like candleholder, Lumiere. David Ogden Stiers is Cogsworth, the mantel clock; Angela Lansbury is Mrs. Potts, the teapot; and Jo Anne Worley is the Wardrobe. There isn't anything particularly haunting, and not all the script's variations are fresh. But this is easily the zippiest Disney cartoon feature in the thirty years since "101 Dalmatians." Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise directed the screenplay by Linda Woolverton.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, and Cinema I. . . . ¶ Guild; through April 18.)

BOULEVARD NIGHTS (1979)—Earnest, uninspired movie about the Chicano gangs of the east Los Angeles barrio. There's a well-shot sequence—a psychedelic parade of the decorated, customized low-rider cars cruising on Whittier Boulevard on Saturday night. But the story, about the strivings of the poor and the tragic macho explosions that trap them, is grindingly familiar; it's reminiscent of the Warners working-class-family dramas of the thirties and the later black-family dramas, such as "A Raisin in the Sun." There's the hardworking young man (Richard Yñiguez) and his mixed-up, loser brother (Danny De La Paz), who feels like a real somebody only when he's with his gang. De La Paz has a poignant self-destructive quality, like John Garfield in "Four Daughters"; he's seen in closeup so much, though, that he becomes wearing. With Marta Du Bois. Directed by Michael Pressman, from a script by Desmond Nakano; cinematography by John Bailey; music by Lalo Schifrin.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; April 19.)

BUGSY—This opulent period gangster movie, written by James Toback and directed by Barry Levinson, is largely a showcase for the old-fashioned star magnetism of Warren Beatty, who plays the legendary Benjamin (Bugsy) Siegel. The screenplay portrays Bugsy as a charming, mercurial psychopath with a rather touching taste for glamour; it concentrates on the last few years of the hero's life, when he became a Hollywood celebrity and built

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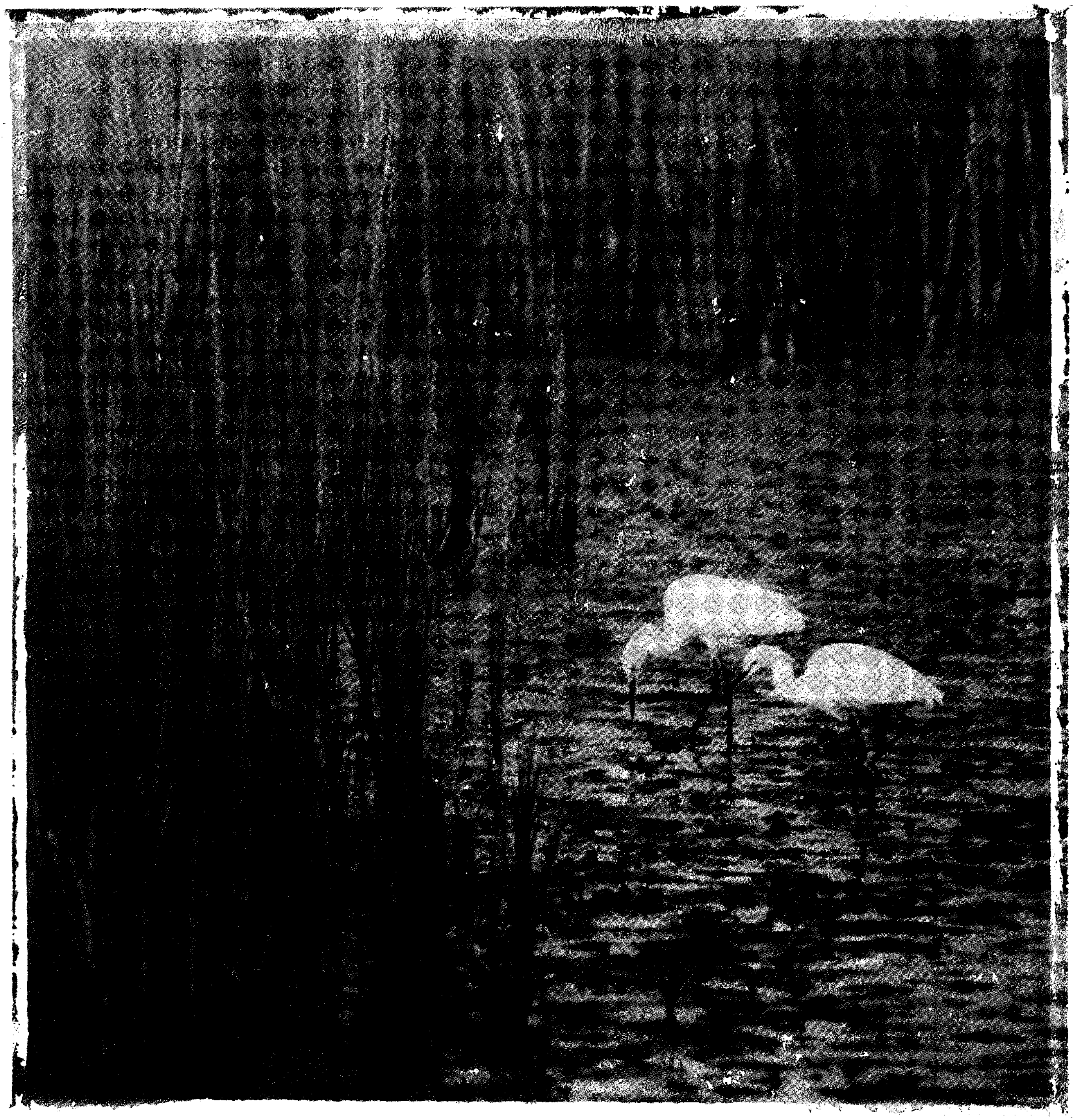

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the first hotel-casino in Las Vegas. He's a vivid, unpredictable, one-of-a-kind guy, and the filmmakers seem to realize that they can't take their eyes off him for a second. Siegel is a fascinating monster; we don't want to take our eyes off him, either. This is a rich role for Beatty, and he tears into it hungrily. It's the best kind of star performance: Beatty seems entirely himself, but in a new way. He's ferociously, mesmerizingly funny. Annette Bening plays Bugsy's lover, the tough, wily, independent-minded mob courtesan Virginia Hill, and she more than holds her own in her scenes with the star. And the movie is filled with pungent, memorable supporting performances. Ben Kingsley brings a surprisingly dry, elegant sense of comic timing to his portrait of sober Meyer Lansky (one of the hero's partners in the New York mob). Harvey Keitel, as Mickey Cohen, Bugsy's right-hand man in Los Angeles, spits out his profane lines as if they were live firecrackers. Elliott Gould plays the tiny role of Harry Greenberg, an aging, flabby mob schlemiel, and he's absolutely inspired; he plays this dazed character as a Willy Loman who has wandered too far from the old territory. Despite its lavish surface, this is essentially a movie of small, lovingly crafted pleasures. It's smart, swanky fun.—T.R. (12/30/91) (Loews 19th Street East 6, and Eastside Cinema.)

Un Chien Andalou (1928)—Even without the famous shock image of the sliced eye, Luis Buñuel's and Salvador Dali's short silent film has the hallucinatory and incendiary effect they sought. Some of the images have great poetic force, and at times they have an erotic humor that one has difficulty explaining, even to oneself. With Pierre Batcheff as the cyclist, Dali as the priest, and Buñuel as the man with the razor.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; starting April 17.)

Earth (1930)—The specific subject is collectivization, but Dovzhenko's masterwork is a passionate lyric on the continuity of man, death, and nature. The theme is perhaps most startlingly expressed in a sequence about a man who has just celebrated the arrival of a tractor. He starts to dance—for sheer love of life—on his way home, and as he dances in the middle of the moonlit road he is suddenly struck by a bullet. (In the fifties, it was voted one of the ten greatest films of all time by an international group of critics.) Silent.—P.K. (Anthology Film Archives; April 18.)

Europa Europa—This superb film by the Polish director Agnieszka Holland is based on the memoirs of Salomon Perel, a German Jew who spent much of the Second World War passing for Aryan in an élite Hitler Youth academy. The movie dramatizes this almost inconceivable survival story with a surprisingly light touch. It bounds from one jaw-dropping episode to the next with the speed and the unnerving neutrality of a picaresque adventure, and never pauses to judge its ambiguous hero; it's content to let the ironies of his situation collect around him like reflections in dressing-room mirrors. His family's flight from the Nazis begins in 1938, on the eve of his bar mitzvah. Solly (played by a remarkable young actor, Marco Hofschneider) lands first in Lodz, Poland, and then in the Soviet Union, where he becomes a star pupil in a Communist school. After the Wehrmacht invades Russia and takes him prisoner, he reincarnates himself as an orphaned "pure" German, an Aryan child wandering in the barbaric eastern wilderness. We remain, however, constantly aware (as he is) of what his Nazi disguise conceals—his circumcised penis, the irreversible and unambiguous sign of his identity as a Jew. Holland uses this physical evidence of Solly's Jewishness as the fulcrum of the movie's delicately balanced narrative and moral tensions. Also with Julie Delpy, Andre Wilms, Halina Labonarska, and Rene Hofschneider. The real Salomon Perel appears, as himself, in the movie's final scene. In German and Russian.—T.R. (7/1/91) (Art East Cinema, and Quad Cinema. . . . ¶ 8th St. Playhouse; April 14.)

Fried Green Tomatoes—Cancer, wife-beating, burning crosses, barbecue, fat-lady jokes at the expense of Kathy Bates, wisdom dispensed by Jessica Tandy, and female bonding that stops just shy of lesbianism. That's the recipe for this clunky, fraudulent, yet apparently crowd-pleasing laugh-and tear-jerker. In the framing story, Tandy befriends Bates and inspires her with the Depression-era tale of tomboy Idgie (Mary Stuart Masterson) and pretty, demure Ruth (Mary-Louise Parker), who discover happiness when they found the Whistle Stop Café in Idgie's small Alabama home town. The director, Jon Avnet, drenches the palate with sweet sauce, then goes for the throat. The only good white males are run over by a train; in this feminist wish fulfillment, it isn't only tomatoes that get sliced. Written by Fannie Flagg (who has a bit role) and Carol Sobieski from Flagg's novel "Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café."—M.S. (Baronet, Waverly, and Regency; through April 16.)

Hear My Song—In this small-scale comedy, Peter Chelsom, a first-time director, takes a whimsical conceit and sells it so hard that it loses most of its fragile charm. Micky O'Neill (played by Adrian Dunbar, who co-wrote the screenplay with Chelsom) manages a Liverpool music hall that caters to the local Irish community; the movie is about his attempt to find a legendary Irish tenor named Josef Locke, who hasn't been heard from in thirty years. Micky goes to Ireland to persuade Locke to return to England for a concert; on the home soil, the hero finds himself in a realm of ancient eccentricity and unearthly light, and the movie finds itself in Bill Forsyth territory. Chelsom tries, too strenuously, to evoke the enchanted comic tone of "Local Hero," and Dunbar seems to punctuate every gag with a roguish smile. The relentless quirkiness is annoying, but the story is, on its own terms, well constructed, and the filmmakers take their fey, sentimental humor right to the limit: you can't say that they don't have the courage of their elfinness. And when Ned Beatty, who plays Locke, is on the screen the picture is nearly as transporting as it's intended to be. His performance is large-spirited comic acting: a pure specimen of Celtic soulfulness, the magical substance that everyone else in the movie has been trying to produce synthetically. Also with Shirley Anne Field.—T.R. (3/9/92) (Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Henri-Georges Clouzot's 1955 exercise in terror, "Diabolique" (playing April 20, at Theatre 80 St. Marks), is the dankest movie of all time, and one of the creepiest. Water in mudholes, bathtubs, sinks, and a swimming pool, medicines dispensed from eyedroppers and needles, doctored whiskey, and even photo developer and news ink—they all form an amniotic fluid that succors evil. Clouzot doesn't wallow in metaphor. He lucidly works out a startling murder plot involving a boarding-school headmaster (Paul Meurisse) and two teachers: his long-suffering wife and benefactor (Vera Clouzot), and his mistress (Simone Signoret). The wife is an ex-nun with a heart condition, and Signoret is a shady lady. When they team up to kill Meurisse, a charismatic brute, the odds seem stacked in the man's favor. But you can't judge by appearances. "Two words, three lies"—that's how Meurisse describes Signoret's character. The phrase also sums up this deceptively straightforward adaptation of the novel "Celle Qui N'Était Plus," by Boileau and Narcejac.

In "Diabolique," the mischievous deviltry of schoolboys can't compare to the life-and-death fiendishness of adults. A couple of the characters use children to further their goals; just allowing the kids to witness violent, kinky marital tension is unsettling enough. All the sex is sadistic. The film is peppered with malicious yet peculiarly charged touches: for example, Signoret never looks sexier than when she wears sunglasses indoors, even if they're meant to hide a black eye Meurisse has given her. Clouzot begins with a quote from Barbey D'Aurevilly: "A painting is always quite moral when it is tragic and it gives the horror of the thing it depicts." If the movie's tragic stature is debatable, Clouzot doesn't stint on the horror. Despite the flood of imitations that followed, "Diabolique" hasn't lost its clamminess or its fright quotient.

JFK—Oliver Stone's movie means to demonstrate that the assassination of John F. Kennedy was not the act of a disturbed Marxist loner named Lee Harvey Oswald but the result of a vast, complex right-wing conspiracy. The screenplay, by Stone and Zachary Sklar, packs an extraordinary amount of assassination lore into three hours and eight minutes; it also includes a ton of speculative material about governmental misconduct, and quite a few invented characters. The movie is a thick gumbo of truths, half-truths, unverifiable hypotheses, and pure rant, and Stone ladles it out indiscriminately. In essence, the conspiracy theory argued here amounts to a series of inferential leaps proceeding from a speculation (that J.F.K. was killed because he wanted to pull out of Vietnam and end the Cold War). It's all bombast and misdirection, like a courtroom summation by a lawyer who knows that he can't win on the evidence. Stone comes on like a fearless radical, but his attitude toward the audience is firmly in the Hollywood tradition: he tries to bypass the intellect and go straight for the gut. The picture plays like an endless episode of "America's Most Wanted." Its hysterical manner and its slipshod handling of the facts actually have the effect of diminishing the credibility of the case for conspiracy. The clearest sounds we hear in this movie are those of Oliver Stone shooting himself in the foot. With Kevin Costner as New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, Sissy Spacek as his wife, Gary Oldman as Oswald, and an all-star cast of witnesses and conspirators.—T.R. (1/13/92) (Loews 19th Street East 6, and Gemini. . . . ¶ Worldwide Cinemas. Evenings only.)

The Mambo Kings—Oscar Hijuelos' overlong yet likable novel "The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love," about two Cuban musician brothers who emigrate to New York and land a guest spot on "I Love Lucy," should be prime fodder for the movies. But in the hands of the first-time director Arne Glimcher it becomes the worst sort of varnished kitsch. Glimcher and his screenwriter, Cynthia Cidre, ransack old movies for corner-cutting devices and use them to jack up Hijuelos' nostalgic evocations of the fifties. The result is overpoweringly ersatz—"The Cotton Club" with a Cuban accent. Armand Assante is the fiery brother, Antonio Banderas the sensitive one, Maruschka Detmers a book-reading beauty, and Cathy Moriarty a slangy, sexy cigarette gal. They're all encouraged to be icons; only the engagingly salty and good-humored Moriarty breaks her assigned mold.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews New York Twin, Loews Orpheum VII, and Cinema 3.)

Mississippi Masala—With Denzel Washington and Sarita Choudhury, directed by Mira Nair. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Angelika Film Center, and Carnegie Hall Cinema.)

My Cousin Vinny—With Joe Pesci, Ralph Macchio, Marisa Tomei, Mitchell Whitfield, and Fred Gwynne; directed by Jonathan Lynn. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 34th St. East, Crown Gotham, Chelsea Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

Panique (1946)—Julien Duvivier's psychological thriller is a devastatingly effective job of visual storytelling. Michel Simon is the stranger in a Paris suburb who is framed for murder; Viviane Romance and her lover, Paul Bernard, are the ones who frame him. The sordid, intriguingly nasty movie—taken, inevitably, from a Simenon novel—has some pretensions toward being a parable of sadistic injustice; on that level, it can't be taken very seriously. But in terms of how the sequences are planned, and how they build, it's an unusual, near-perfect piece of film craftsmanship. In French.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; April 20.)

The Player—With Tim Robbins, directed by Robert Altman. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Beekman, and Chelsea Cinemas.)

The Power of One—This melodrama, set in thirties and forties South Africa, is supposed to be about any individual's ability to influence history with moral action, and the clout people gain when they unite. But the director, John Avildsen, and the screenwriter, Robert Mark Kamen, put their "Karate Kid" trademark on the story of a white boy who battles apartheid. Young PK, played in succession by Guy Witcher, Simon Fenton, and Stephen Dorff, learns the horror of racism from Afrikaners and his fellow-Brits, while a series of mentors (particularly Armin Mueller-Stahl and Morgan Freeman) nurture his spiritual and physical strength. Whites grow to fear him and blacks treat him as a god. Everything is awash in superhero-worship. By the end, the title refers mostly to the power of PK. With John Gielgud; Dean Semler did the cinematography. From the novel by Bryce Courtenay.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Loews Orpheum VII. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; through April 14. . . . ¶ Coronet; through April 16.)

The Prince of Tides—Barbra Streisand's film, adapted from Pat Conroy's 1986 novel, is a big, earnest psychoanalytic soap opera. It's a story in which people come to terms with their past, make peace with the demons that have haunted them since childhood, learn how to let go of the "dysfunctional" emotional patterns inflicted on them by their parents, and become sensitive, caring human beings. Streisand treats this banal material affectionately, even reverently, but it plays better on the screen than it does on the page. Her direction is smooth and canny, and she has distilled the novel to its corn-based essence. But the fumes of the book's terrible ideas linger in the air. After a while, everything begins to feel predictable. Conroy's narrative method (he co-wrote the screenplay, with Becky Johnston) consists of establishing characters who embody common stereotypes, setting them in motion around each other, and then watching them follow the courses that he's mapped for them: his message is one of change and liberation, but his characters' orbits are fixed. As the soul-searching hero, Tom Wingo, Nick Nolte bears the weight of all the movie's ambitions, and, for the most part, he carries his burden with miraculous grace. Streisand plays a sympathetic New York psychiatrist and never seems to get the hang of the role, but most of the cast performs heroically: Blythe Danner, as Tom's wife, and Kate Nelligan, as his mother, are wonderful. This is an admirably scrupulous job of literary adaptation; it's the material that's dysfunctional.—T.R. (1/27/92) (Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Loews 19th Street East 6; through April 16.)

Salt of the Earth (1954)—The raw material for this social-realist movie, made in a semi-documentary style, is a 1951-52 strike of Mexican-American zinc miners in New Mexico. The picture was sponsored by the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (expelled from the C.I.O. in 1950 as Communist dominated), made by blacklisted filmmakers, and financed by money "borrowed from liberal Americans." The miners are supposedly striking for equality with the "Anglos," but the strike is not a bargaining weapon for definite limited objectives. It's inflated with lessons, suggestions, and implications. "Strike" here is used in its revolutionary meaning as a training ground in solidarity, a preparation for the big strike to come; it's a microcosm of the coming revolution. A pedagogical tone, reminiscent of the thirties, is maintained throughout much of the movie: these strikers are always teaching each other constructive little lessons, and their dialogue is blown up to the rank of folk wisdom. Rosaura Revueltos, the Mexican actress who has the leading role, is nobility incarnate—the Madonna on the picket line. Directed by Herbert J. Biberman; written by Michael Wilson.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; April 18.)

Shadows and Fog—Woody Allen sets his latest art-cum-comedy thing in a nameless country that resembles the Germany of movies by Pabst, Murnau, and Fritz Lang. As an irritating nebbish named Kleinman, who gets caught up in a search for a mad killer, he anchors a farrago of generic art-house themes and personalities. Such familiar figures as a messed-up clown (John Malkovich) and a hyper-rational man of science (Donald Pleasence) either suffer the torments of love or try to find the root of evil. Carlo Di Palma's ludicrously deliberate and grainy black-and-white cinematography obscures the first-rate, ill-used cast, though Mia Farrow, as a circus sword-swallower, is so splendorously creamy that she gleams through the murk. John Cusack brings an affecting, lightly parodistic ardor to the role of a romantic, prematurely world-weary student—the kind of character who could have thought up this cockeyed pessimist of a movie. Julie Kavner plays a woman who's never forgiven Kleinman for jilting her at the altar; she wins the heartiest audience response, possibly because she keeps telling him to buzz off and die. With glimpses of Lily Tomlin, Jodie Foster, Kathy Bates, Fred Gwynne, Madonna, David Ogden Stiers, and many others, including a barely discernible Kate Nelligan.—M.S. (4/6/92) (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews Tower East, and Loews Columbus Circle.)

The Ten Commandments (1956)—Charlton Heston is the highly athletic Moses; Anne Baxter is the kittenish princess who loves him; Judith Anderson is the sinister slave who knows the secret of his Jewish birth; Cedric Hardwicke is the likable old Pharaoh; Yul Brynner is the prince who beats Moses to the Egyptian throne; Edward G. Robinson is the traitor to the Jews; Debra Paget is the young slave old Robinson has got his eyes on. Stir them all together, throw in stone tablets, and a whopping big Golden Calf, part the Red Sea, and you've got Cecil B. De Mille's epic—three hours and thirty-eight minutes of it. As old-fashioned hokum, it's palatable and rather tasty. Also with Yvonne de Carlo, John Derek, John Carradine, Nina Foch, Douglass Dumbrille, Martha Scott, Vincent Price, Henry Wilcoxon, and H. B. Warner.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; April 17 and 19.)

Thunderheart—This murder mystery, set on a Sioux reservation, teams Sam Shepard, as an F.B.I. agent who speaks with forked tongue, and Val Kilmer, as an agent who thinks with forked mind. Kilmer's character is one-quarter Sioux, which apparently affects the right side of his brain—he gets mystical flashes and visions. When he hangs out with Indian traditionalists like the tribal cop played drolly by Graham Greene, his ancestral instincts emerge, leading him to truth, justice, and the Native American way. John Fusco's messagey script satirizes the stereotype of the all-knowing authentic Indian, then buys into it. The director, Michael Apted, elicits credible performances from Shepard and (in a tiny part) Fred Ward, and blends them confidently with the non-professionals in the supporting cast. But Kilmer is more callow than necessary. His lack of authority makes the raising of his consciousness seem more like a coming of age.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, First & 62nd Cinemas, Loews Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Ziegfeld; through April 14.)

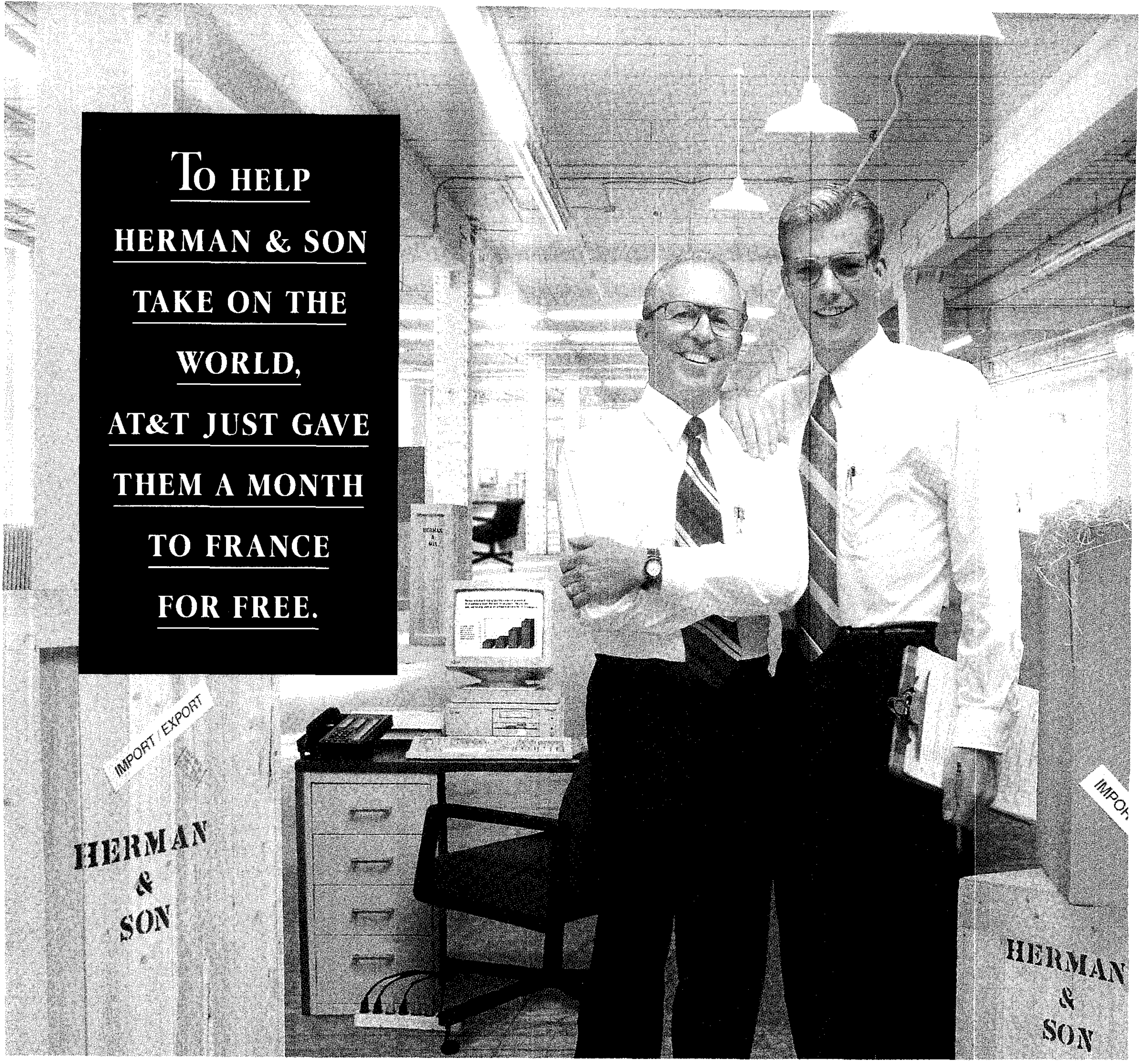
Collet

Paul Bernard and Viviane Romance in "Panique"

Wayne's World—"Saturday Night Live" has become a repackaging industry. The extended antics of vidiot savants Wayne Campbell (Mike Myers) and Garth Algar (Dana Carvey) betray the same slapped-together quality as the TV specials "Toonces, the Cat Who Could Drive a Car" and "Saturday Night Live Goes Commercial," though the film is not as entertaining. Seen in five-minute spurts on "S.N.L.," beaming out their cable-access program from Wayne's basement, these two come off as cracked bellwethers of the Next Big Things of suburban youth culture, Hard Rock Division. (Their pre-"Truth or Dare" show with Madonna was a classic.) In the movie, Myers still boasts his inexplicably confident and cheery expressions—he's a mischievous smile button. But Carvey overworks his twisted mouth. Wayne and Garth weren't meant to be frozen on celluloid the way they are in this parody of coöptation, which casts them as victims of a manipulative commercial-TV promoter (Rob Lowe). Here they function as leaders of a nostalgia-fest for audiences with short attention spans. Carvey has one good bit, playing out a murder with some frosted crullers, and the ever-game Lowe musters up a funny walk after a cop gives him a heavy frisk. Penelope Spheeris directed, from a script by Myers, Bonnie Turner, and Terry Turner.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, and Embassy. . . . ¶ Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex; through April 16.)

White Men Can't Jump—A resourceful, sneaky-fast comedy about playground basketball. Ron Shelton, the writer and director, focusses on grown men trying to make a living at a boy's game, and he does full justice to the sweet absurdity of that enterprise. He keeps his eye on the fine points of playground culture and lets the story's meaning—and its humor—emerge from the details. The heroes, Sidney (Wesley Snipes) and Billy (Woody Harrelson), are addicted to the game. As a two-man team, they venture into the tough, hostile inner-city neighborhoods of Los Angeles and try to hustle the kings of the local courts. It's a great con: everyone assumes that Billy can't play the speedy, shake-and-bake style of black playground ball. Shelton and his crew (which includes cinematographer Russell Boyd and the editor Paul Seydor) have put together basketball sequences that capture the free-flowing rhythms of the game. The two-on-two contests here give us the delicious feeling a player gets when he's *almost* out of control: flying but lucid. Harrelson's performance is rich, subtle, and delicately funny. And Snipes is just amazing: everything he does seems to leap off the screen. Shelton orchestrates the narrative like a veteran point guard: he's a wily pro with a streak of playground showmanship, and that's an ideal style for movies as well as for basketball. The picture has a generous spirit and a deep appreciation of play, and it moves with a distinctive funky grace: it takes things as they come and trusts itself to handle them.—T.R. (4/6/92) (Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Olympia, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Bay Cinema; through April 16.)

Zelig (1983)—Woody Allen's intricately layered parody—a mock documentary about a celebrity of the twenties, Zelig the Human Chameleon (Allen), who takes on the characteristics of whatever strong personalities he comes in contact with. The film seems small, and there's a reason: there aren't any characters in it, not even Zelig. Allen shafts the almost universally accepted idea that everyone is someone. This is a fantasy about being famous for being nobody. The whole movie is an ingenious stunt: it has been thought out in terms of the film image, turning the American history we know from newsreels into slapstick by inserting the little lost sheep Zelig in a corner of the frame. Zelig's story couldn't have been told any other way—the pathos would have been crushing. The documentary fakery dries it out and keeps it light. Zelig is always just glimpsed and the movie darts on. It's made up of artful little touches.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; April 21.)



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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

A FRIEND who used to live in Canada writes:

Listening to the talk in this year's Presidential campaign, I've been baffled when I hear politicians explain how unsuccessful the Canadian health-care system is, and how wretched it makes Canadians. In February, for example, President Bush admitted that the American health-care system—which leaves more than thirty-five million Americans without any health insurance at all—was imperfect, but he also said that the American system was "the best in the entire world," while a system of socialized medicine like Canada's, in which the government provides universal medical coverage, would be "a cure worse than the disease." The President said that if we tried to impose a Canadian-style system it would lead to long waits for surgery, and disastrous costs. "When you nationalize health care," he explained, "you push costs higher, far higher." In a similar vein, Newt Gingrich, the House Republican whip, told the American people that "the Canadian model controls cost by letting people die." And Senator Tsongas said that *he* might be dead today if he had been living in Canada, because the bone-marrow transplant that he needed when he was sick with cancer would have been unavailable there.

All this seemed so out of step with my own memory that I wondered if some terrible logjam had overcome the Canadian system in the years since I left, and decided to make a call to an old family doctor and friend, Samuel O. Freedman; he is the former dean of the McGill medical school and the current director of the research institute at the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal, and he is almost legendary in Montreal for his reasoned good sense on all kinds of issues. When I got him on the phone, I asked him if he had been following the American campaign and the debate about health insurance.

"I have, and it's bizarre," he said, with what was for him unusual fervor. "It says something very strange about the nature of American politics, since just about everything that has been said about Canadian medical care— Well, I wouldn't want to call it a lie, but there must be an incredible fund of willful ignorance at work. Take Senator Tsongas, for instance. I just can't figure out why he would say that about the bone-marrow transplant. As it happens, the two doctors who did the pioneering work that made that kind of transplant possible are good friends of mine. Both are Canadians; both work in Toronto, at the Ontario Cancer Institute; and both did their work with help from the Canadian government. Of *course* the operation is available here. Then, there was President Bush saying that you had to wait six months for heart surgery in British Columbia. B.C. had delays like that years ago, but there's simply no way that British Columbia has those kinds of waits anymore—the system is pretty good at responding to problems. The trouble with our system isn't that people don't have enough access to health care. If anything, it's that they have too much access to health care; they're inclined to go to the doctor too often, get too much minor surgery, and so on—have too much faith in doctoring. Overdoctoring, we call it.

"And when Mr. Bush says that costs are higher in a system like Canada's, I'm not sure where he's getting his figures. The costs in a single-payer system, like ours, are lower, because there's only one insurer—the government—and that cuts down on paperwork and administrative duplication, and all that. Canadian medical costs are about nine per cent of the G.N.P., compared with about twelve per cent in the States. More important, we end up spending about twenty per cent less per capita on health care than you do, and we're still ahead in the two most crucial public-health indicators—life expectancy and infant mortality. It's true that taxes are higher here, but when you figure in the real costs of the American system—the burden on the G.N.P., and the high costs to employers who have to provide insurance, and so on—over all, this is really a much cheaper system. And the irony is that more and more private insurance companies in America, trying to contain costs, have these managed-care programs, in which you don't have any

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choice about what doctor you see, while here you do.

"It's true that Canadian doctors make less money than American doctors, but that was true before our Medicare system went into effect. There are probably doctors here who wish they were making more, but how much do you really need? There are plenty of doctors—you're talking to one—who are just grateful every day to be out of that damned business of billing and collecting.

"Of course, the government is involved in medical care here. There's no denying that. The Quebec government may say, 'Well, we've got five magnetic-resonance imagers in the Montreal hospitals. We just don't need another—can't afford another.' But that doesn't mean that people don't have access to M.R.I. What it *does* mean is that we won't be spending our money competing with each other while downstairs in the emergency room we're turning away people who aren't insured.

"You know, it's not just a question of health care. We have a system here that is really accepted by the whole spectrum of political opinion. We have conservatives who are as far to the right on most issues as any American conservative, but they're just as staunchly for the Medicare system as anybody. It has become a national value—the principle that everybody who needs medical care can get it, and nobody asks you if you're rich or poor, or where you work. Knowing that everybody gets the same care helps to hold a society together—it makes everybody feel equally valued. There aren't many things in the world that just *work*—that just make sense. I mean, here are two contiguous countries, and one has a system that everybody is more or less happy with and the other doesn't, and yet the one that doesn't is determined not to learn anything from the one that does. I don't understand it."

Doctor Freedman is too well-mannered and uncontentious—in a way, too Canadian—to say so, but it occurred to me after I talked to him that the reason President Bush and Representative Gingrich, and even Senator Tsongas, were misrepresenting Canadian health care was simple. To admit that it is better than ours would be to admit that there are important things (other than fighting wars) that governments can do uniquely well, and for the past decade the whole ideological structure of American "conservatism" has depended on constant, relentless reiteration of the claim that all government is necessarily evil. The Bush Administration has come to depend for its continued political existence on successfully turning American minds against any conception of the state as the guarantor of the common welfare, and has managed to make even the most conventional arguments for social compassion sound like the entering wedge of totalitarianism. But what defeated Communism, after all, was not capitalism alone but socialism, too—the demonstration, throughout the countries of Western Europe in particular (whose situation the Eastern Europeans could so easily compare with their own), that it was possible for a government to protect a prospering free-market economy and still operate as a kind of mutual-insurance society, providing everybody with protection in the face of life's inevitable costs and disasters. The compulsion that drives President Bush to distort the facts about Canadian health care suggests that official American policy is in the process of becoming what conservatives, in discussing the Soviet Union, used to call "a total ideology"—a system blindly convinced of its absolute truth, and yet so fragile in its relationship to reality that it is incapable of considering even the most obvious reform. Surely we should have learned by now what happens to ideological systems that begin to deny facts that their people can discover for themselves just by crossing a border.

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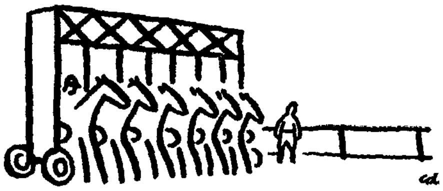
Stretching

GREGORY PECK, who is being honored this month by the Film Society of Lincoln Center, was in town the other day, and we stopped by the penthouse of the Fitzpatrick Manhattan, where he was staying. Mr. Peck's acting is not associated with showy physical movement, yet we recently ran across the information that, for a brief time some fifty years ago, he was a dancer. He studied with Martha Graham for two years in a Neighborhood Playhouse class—whose alumni also include Tony Randall, Eli Wallach, Joanne Woodward, Woody Allen, and Lorne Greene—and we decided to investigate how an actor's work in the dance studio could help him on the screen.



Over a cup of tea, we asked Mr. Peck what Graham's class was like. "Some of these things I haven't thought about for fifty years," he said. "Now, let's see." After a pause, he went on to say, "Graham didn't hope to make dancers of us—her class was part of our training as actors. We studied with her three times a week. The theory was that the dancing would free our bodies from inhibitions, so that the words would grow out of the movement. You portray your character and tell your story with the body and the emotions. The words flow on top, while underneath is a river of emotion, sometimes turbulent, sometimes calm—that was the idea, both for Graham and for Sanford Meisner, who taught us a way of acting that came out of Stanislavsky and is now known as the Method School.

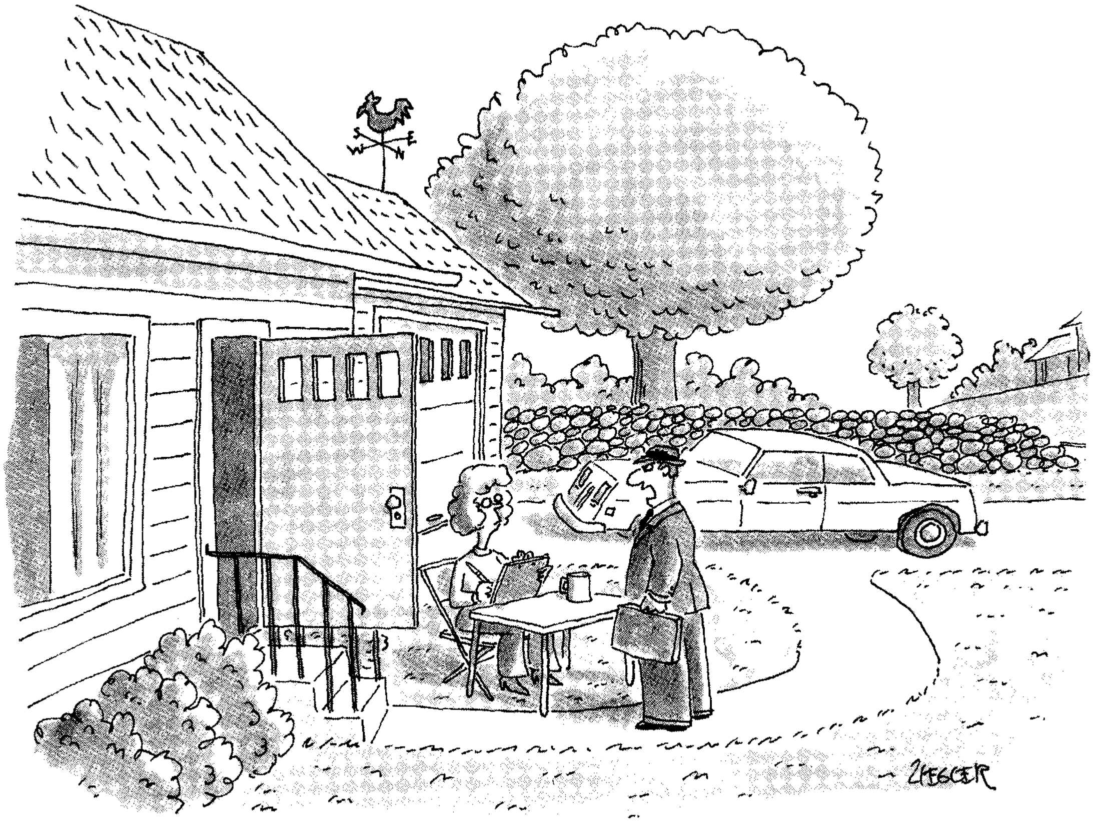
"As for Martha herself, she was forty-five years old then and at the peak of her career—in the prime of her prime. She was doing her greatest original ballets, and making her great New York appearances. I was in my early twenties, and my recollection is that she was voluptuous—a most dramatic woman, with strong sensuality. She didn't have a sense of humor, but there were compensations in her richness, in her womanliness, and in her passion. She was not funny—she was something else. She was also a disciplinarian—determined, firm, demanding. It wasn't playtime. I remember that she had us do rigorous stretching exercises. If you can put your legs together straight out in front of you on the floor and then put your head between your knees, that's a gift from God. The girls were naturally better at it than the boys—we were not so flexible. More than once, Graham put her knee in my back and said, 'Come on, Gregory, you can do it.'

"But the most difficult thing, and the most embarrassing, was when we all had to choreograph a piece to thirty-two bars of music that we chose. If you've never created original movement before, it's as if you were in deep water and didn't know how to swim. My concept was a factory assembly line—inspired by Charlie Chaplin's 'Modern Times,' I guess. I had some harsh, mechanical gestures. It was pretty horrible. Still, in the long run it proved invaluable experience. To get up and do that assignment actually gave you courage. I'm sure that it helped my stage presence. The use of your body in acting is a matter of choreographing your own movement as you go along, so that each moment helps to reveal the character. You could almost say that you don't move a finger without a meaning. In Westerns, for instance, I always found myself almost subconsciously moving in a way that would complement the cinematography—the way I walked, the way I got off a horse. You keep the pictorial element in the back of your mind, and you further the story and reveal the character at the same time."

Mr. Peck paused again, then said, "At the end of the second year—at the end of the course—the class got together on something called the Martha Graham project. It had to be an original thing that we would conceive and execute together, and it had to show dance, acting, and vocal training. We'd heard what previous classes had done, and we decided to get a book on the American square dance. After we read it, we chose some traditional intricate maneuvers, like that circle where everyone locks arms and then, as the men begin to go around like a carrousel, the girls' feet leave the ground. Very spectacular. Our costumes were simple white shirts and bluejeans for the boys and country dresses for the girls. The choreography was worked out so that we'd keep reverting to a figure called Crack the Whip, which would throw one person from the group out of the communal dance and into the spotlight. Then, while the dance continued upstage in the shadows, the soloist would do whatever he or she wanted. I sang a Western ballad about a young man who was going to be hanged. One girl did a monologue from a play by Lynn Riggs called 'Green Grow the Lilacs.' Those Martha Graham projects were performed for the public, at the Heckscher Theatre, and a lot of well-known people used to attend. The night of our project, Lawrence Langner and his wife were in the audience. Sometime after that, he announced that the Theatre Guild was producing a Western musical to be adapted from 'Green Grow the Lilacs.' The musical was 'Oklahoma!' I don't have documentary proof that it was our choreography and the girl's recitation that inspired Langner's production, but I like to imagine that they went home that night and one of them wrote down in a diary, 'Saw some kids at the Heckscher Theatre. Interesting.' "

We asked Mr. Peck whether he had arrived at Graham's class with any sort of athletic background.

"I was an English major at U. Cal. Berkeley, but I rowed on the eight-man crew," he said. "For the past three weeks, I've actually been working with a U.C.L.A. rowing coach on rowing a single scull, for my part in a television film I'm now shooting of Tina Howe's 'Painting Churches.' My character's opening scene shows him rowing a single scull on the river. It's quite a trick. The dynamic of the rowing begins in the legs, then goes to the rump, then the arms follow through. Then you feather the oar out of the water, push your body forward, and catch the rhythm again. Rowing is an expensive sport, and there's no money in it from endorsements. You do it because you love it, that's all. When I did it, it was known to attract eggheads—engineers with slide rules hanging off their belts, literary types,



"Yes, Myra, I do still love you. What I don't love, however, is this exit poll every damned morning."

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and premed students. The coaches used to boast that they had the team with the highest median I.Q."

We asked whether Mr. Peck's "Painting Churches" character moved in any distinctive way.

"He moves pretty much the way I move," Mr. Peck said. "He's going senile, but his senility is in the very early stages."

Stuff

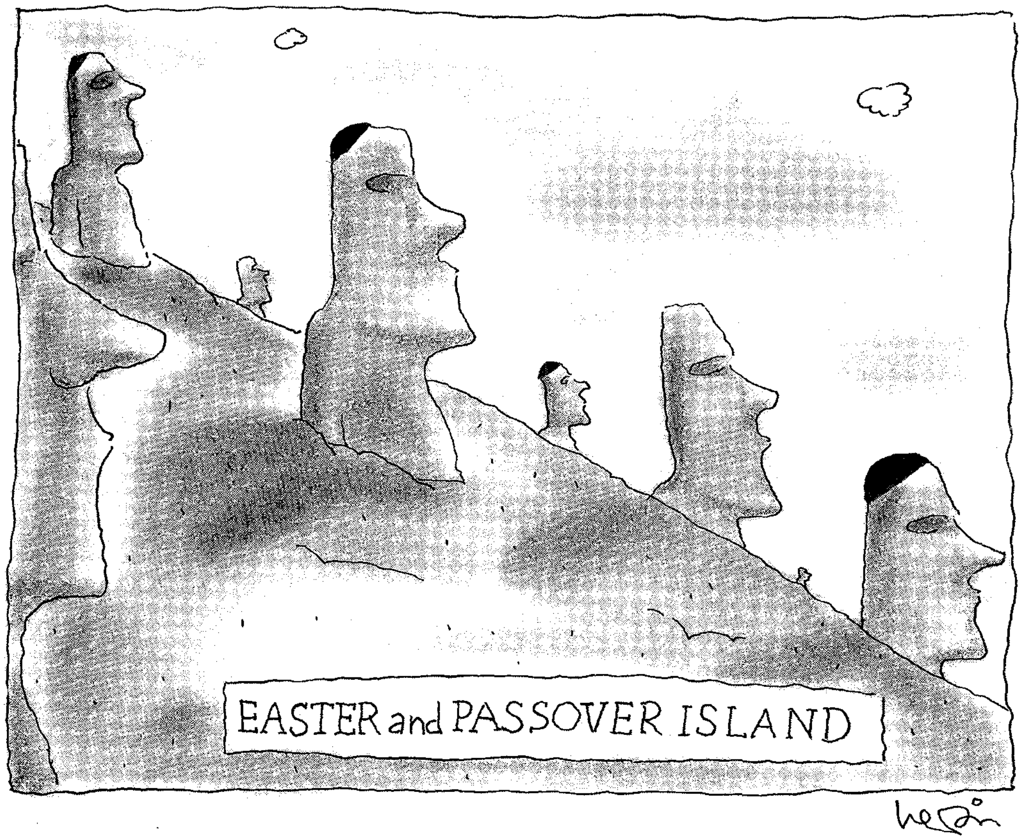
"WE did a lot of research," Andrew S. Ackerman was saying. "Developmentally, kids generally start collecting at around age five or six. They do it, for one reason, because a collection is a world they can control. You know, a lot of kids nowadays have nothing they can control, so in them the instinct becomes more intense than ever. A collection is theirs. They created it. They decide if it's good. It is an expression of who they are."

Mr. Ackerman, who is thirty-eight, is the executive director of the Children's Museum of Manhattan, on Eighty-third Street between Broadway and Amsterdam. As a boy, he collected, among other things, baseball cards and acorns. More recently, he helped to collect three dozen collections that constitute the museum's current show, which—as we noted in these pages a couple of weeks ago—is called "Great Stuff!" and which features collections of baseball cards, stamps, ceramic frogs, soil samples ("What I like about soil is that it's easy to find and simple to display," David Courtney, the collection's owner, says), bottle caps, cast-iron coin banks, Pez dispensers, erasers from all over the world, things made of plastic, and selections from Mayor Dinkins' extensive collection of warmup jackets.

About a fifth of the collections in the show were assembled by young children. One of these, "Found Objects with Holes in Them," is the work of Daniel Low, five years old, who when he was three and a half became irresistibly attracted to buttons, shells, rocks, Lego pieces, beads, and other items that had been pierced, punctured, drilled, perforated, hollowed, or bored. Maurice Chalfin, who is two, recently began acquiring children's socks from around the world. Forty-two of his socks are on display, and no two match, just as in our sock collection.

The two collections that we liked best, though, were both the work of a single grownup—a marketing consultant and part-time antique dealer named Alex Shear. One is called "Pop Brand Radios" and consists of transistor radios designed to look like an almost unbelievable number of other things, including a container of meat tenderizer, a can of Mr. Pibb, a box of Pepperidge Farm stuffing, a bar of deodorant soap, a tiny jukebox, a tiny television set, and telephones from various eras. Shear has collected several hundred such radios, and, for good measure, he has thrown in some telephones designed to look like cheeseburgers, hot dogs, and bottles of ketchup; a camera that looks like a package of cheese; and some wall clocks that look like giant wristwatches. Shear's other collection in the show is "Tin Can Art." It consists of anonymous sculptures made from tin cans, metal scraps, and other found objects. There is an ashtray fashioned from a New Jersey license plate. There is a patchwork lunchbox meticulously assembled from pieces of cans that once contained coffee, shortening, cottonseeds, motor oil, and cigarettes. But most of the sculptures are anthropomorphic. There is a human figure made from electrical boxes and pieces of conduit, and there is one made from engine parts and pieces of chain. Taken together, the sculptures look eerie and numinous, like sacred artifacts from a hitherto undocumented period of human development: the Galvanized Age.

While we were studying the tin-can sculptures, we struck up a conversation with a man of about fifty who had salt-and-pepper hair and a beard and was wearing glasses with tortoiseshell frames. He turned out to be Alex Shear. When he discusses his collections, he speaks rapidly—and usually, we discovered, at great length. Of the sculptures he said, "Most of these are what you would call lunchtime projects. Most of the sculptors were blue-collar guys, and making these objects may have been a way to bring humanness into the workplace. This robot was made by some guy in a tin shop in North Dakota,



“What we want to tap into here is denial.”

and it shows every bend used in heating-duct work. Some of these pieces are almost American Shaker quality. The museum has been very lenient with me. I keep buying new things and bringing them in in shopping bags, and Andy Ackerman has kind of given up. Basically, I love stuff.”

After listening to Shear discuss his collections for twenty minutes or so, we began to worry that he had, in effect, collected us. Almost before we knew what was happening we found ourself in a taxi, and shortly afterward we were weaving among ceiling-high piles of stuff that fill his apartment, which is not far from the museum.

“If someone asks me ‘What do you collect?’ it’s not easy for me to respond,” he said. He led us into a room that may have been his study but more closely resembled a warehouse. Spreading various items on a chair, he said, “We might as well begin here. These are collectibles that have to do with obscure trademark violations.” He showed us some candles called Lite Saver, some pencil sharpeners called Lead Saver, and some bars of soap called Soap Savers. All were packaged in striped containers that clearly infringed on trademarks belonging to the company that makes Life Savers candies. “I have been in litigation,” Shear told us as we examined the objects. “I used to have a design firm, and we had a very difficult copyright infringement, where someone illegally copied a kitchen-houseware design that was very important to me, and I spent seven years in U.S. District Court, and it totally affected my life. In fact, it is probably one of the main reasons I got into antiques. I’m very intense, and if I’m in I’m in. I drop everything.”

Shear led us across the room, lost his footing, and nearly fell into a collection of miniature sample bricks, cinder blocks, and refuse containers. After showing us some cans of Lock Thaw, Loosen-All, Oilit, Lock-Ease, and Oily Bird, he said, “That completes, basically, my collection of thawing lubricants.” He led us through his other rooms, ticking off items as we passed: “A salesman’s sample of a kitchen, from the forties. A can of crow repellent. A beautiful wagon design, don’t you think? These are master patterns, in wood, of sewers—of manhole covers. A U.S. Army field barbershop from 1944. Toy. Glass. Drill bit. This is a prototype of a low-draft hull for the PT boat. I love certain photography. I love pictures of employees forced to wear wool uniforms in August, for the boss. You can see how hot these people are, posing for this picture. I look for these shots, and I have quite a few of them. This one is from 1938. Oh, and here’s a terrific portrait of Clint Eastwood that was painted on mattress ticking by an inmate in a Florida prison.”

As we were looking over several hundred toy cars, trains, boats, and airplanes, Shear said, “When I was a child, I had a Silver Streak sled, when what I wanted was a Flexible Flyer. How does one deal with that? I deal with that by buying not only Flexible Flyers but also these other wonderful sleds that you see here, and after I have worked through that I am left with one of the best collections of sleds from the forties and fifties.”

Later, over dinner at a Cuban-Chinese restaurant around the corner from his apartment, Shear told us that he was divorced three years ago and that the divorce was a major turning point in his life. He has equal custody of his two young sons, who now accompany him on stuff-buying expeditions, and are becoming distinguished collectors in their own right. (Shear’s younger son, Andrew, is represented in “Great Stuff!” by a collection of business cards.) We asked Shear if his pack-rat tendencies had contributed to the dissolution of his marriage. Had he, in some way, squeezed his wife out of his apartment?

“Oh, no,” he said. “I didn’t really have any stuff while we were married. I did some dealing in antiques, but that was it. You see, my wife got all the furniture in the settlement, and suddenly I had this big, empty apartment. So I went on a buying spree.”

“What will happen when you meet someone else?” we asked. “You have hardly enough room for you and your sons as it is.”

“The answer may surprise you,” he said. “I could get rid of all that stuff in a minute.”

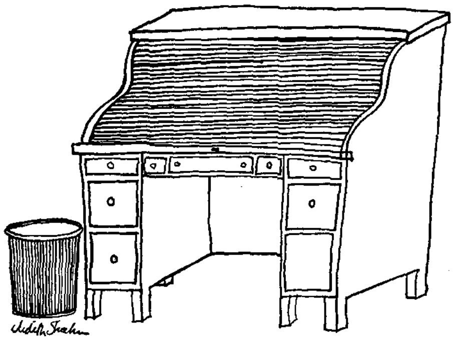
HIS MOTHER INSIDE HIM

Allen Dow had been alarmed, in childhood, by his mother's unhappiness, which would vent itself in sudden storms of temper that flattened the other occupants of the house into the corners and far rooms. Once, he saw his father cowering under the dining table while his mother, red-faced with fury, tried to get at him to slap him again. Allen never forgave her for that—for her doing it, for his seeing it. Though he learned to get around her—indeed, no one was better at getting around her; he was her only child, her confidant, her charmer, her prince, amusing and politic—he remained wary of the rage inside her that he had been permitted to glimpse. She made him nervous, and nervousness became his mode. All the complaints of nervousness—skin rashes, stammering, asthma, insomnia—were his. It took him decades of living hundreds of miles beyond her reach to begin to breathe, to sleep, and to speak normally. The women who drew close to him in the course of his life tended to suffer, and it took no great insight of his to imagine why his heart was, in regard to their sufferings, rather aloof and cool, if not faintly exultant. Whereas with the sufferings of a child or of a man—a man cowering under the table as an alternative to hitting back—he was instantly empathetic. He resented it, then, when, after her death, people (second cousins, Lutheran ministers) fondly remarked on how much he, as he approached sixty, resembled his mother.

He couldn't see it. He looked in the mirror. The fair skin, yes—once freckled, now pocked by spots of sun damage. Though her hair looked brown and had early turned gray, she had been one of nature's redheads, and when he had grown a beard, it had come in reddish. And there was a vexed something about his forehead—a rather low forehead like his mother's, for all their intellectual pretensions. When her temper flared, a pink "V" had appeared between her eyebrows; he had no temper to speak of, but there was a pink roughening of his skin exactly between his eyebrows. Otherwise—nose, mouth, ears—he saw no resemblance.

His ears were the "Hofstetter ears"—small-lobed, protuberant at the tops, like a lemur's. He had inherited them from his grandmother, his mother's mother; a photograph existed of her and her eleven brothers and sisters posed in black together, all with variants of these ears—white spots in the photograph. His mother's ears, as the rest of her body had dwindled in old age, had grown larger and come to look just like her father's, with big, flat, dull-colored lobes. As a little boy, Allen, crayoning on the floor, had often looked up and admired the impressive ears of his grandfather as the old man tilted back his head to bring the newspaper print into focus. His mother, he felt, had identified more with her father than with her mother, a tiny industrious woman toward whom her daughter had felt a compound of wonder, exasperation, and pity—somewhat the way, perhaps, in which Allen regarded his own father. His mother's father figured in the vividest of her family tales of long ago—the man returning from a tavern down a straight dirt road, and greeting with harsh, drunken words the little girl who had run up the road to meet him; the man, younger, working in the woods, sawing and burning trees for the "charcoal business" with his bride's brothers; younger still, slender and unmarried, the man walking miles up and down the local hills to teach at a one-room schoolhouse. The walk took him daily through the farm where a certain young woman, the baby of her large family, spied him out and created a reason, one day of deep snow, for them to meet. We are all the result of sexual events, and their faded heat still warms us. Allen's mother had implanted him with a set of images that entwined, flourishing and fading, among those he had acquired with his own senses.

It surprised him, unpleasantly, when his mother's laugh, its unmistakable sly cry and shy trailing-off, came out of his mouth. And it irritated him to detect, in the workings of his brain, an increasing amount of the fanciful, self-defeating obliquity that had so irritated him in her. In conversation she always resisted simple concurrence, and would nimbly take a contrary position, as if to make life, for herself and her partner in dialogue, more interesting. This curious courtesy was generally wasted on the world, Allen had long ago observed, yet he felt in his own dealings an increasing tendency in the same direction; he couldn't help himself, the pull of the contrary was too strong, and there was too much justice in the case that was not being presented.



For instance, when his second wife was negotiating the price of the suburban spread where they would consolidate their married status, he found himself in the mental position of the sellers, who were desperate to move to California, and he kept proposing to his wife a worse bargain than the one she eventually managed to strike. "Whose side are you on?" she asked in exasperation, and he felt his mother inside him itching to embark on a discourse as to the small- and mean-mindedness of taking anything as simple as a single side, this being the root of all wars and exploitation. There was something very vulgar and unchristian, this inner voice urged, about any display of self-interest. Yet in some sense, too, he was arguing *against* his mother, for she had been, in her rural realm, a considerable acquirer of acreage, adding slice after slice of neighboring property as "protection" of the acreage already possessed. She had done this, in her later years, with Allen's money, even though he hated land—its weediness, its erosiveness, its taxability. Or, rather, he felt about land, as about his mother, ambivalent, she having planted in him the myth that land was sacred, a piece of Mother Earth, endlessly valuable, and the last thing that the vulgar self-interest-seekers of the world would manage to take from you.

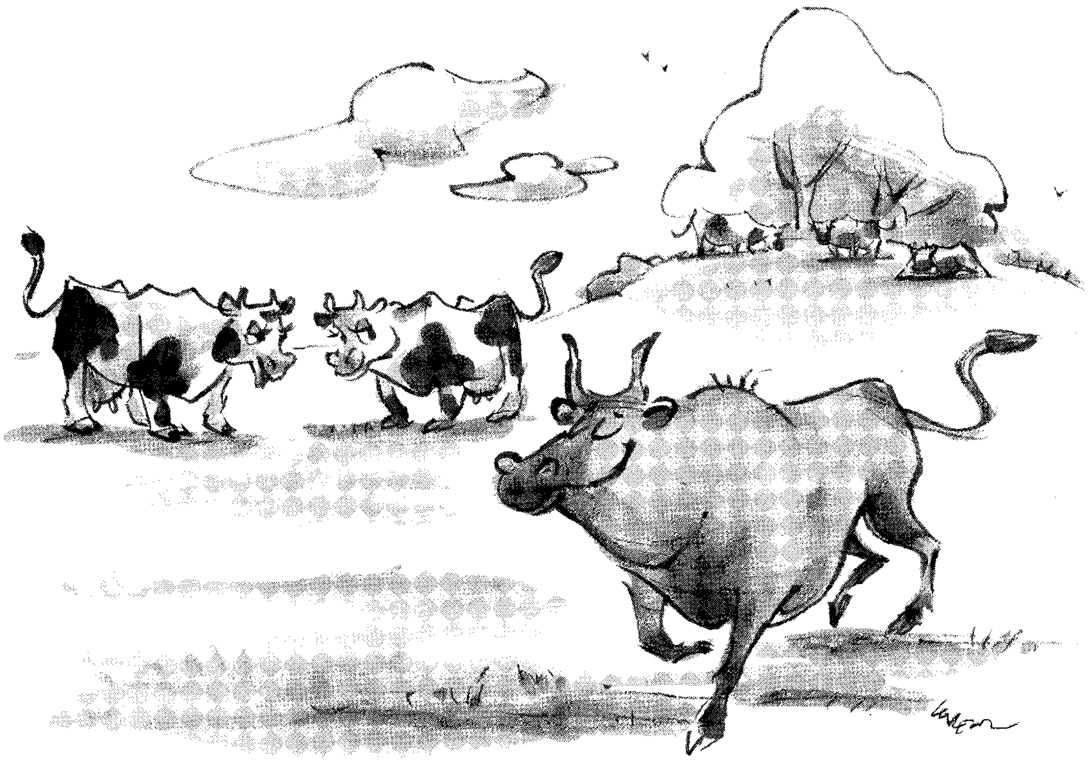
So within him his mother was battling his mother and his sensible wife was the exasperated recipient of a double message. His first wife, too, had been fond of land; she still queened it over a large tract his diligence had supplied. It seemed to be his Sisyphean fate to settle one woman after another in a sizable plot and then move on, momentarily free, until the next female developer locked him into her plans. If he had not, in his wish to avoid his mother's temper, totally erased his own, it might have made him angry to contemplate. But then, his mother's contrarious voice within him urged, where would he have lived, but for these landed women? On the streets? In the trees?

WHEN his mother died, he became the sole custodian of hundreds of small mental pictures. In the most recent, he and his mother were moving in and out of hospitals, stooped and slow, like one of those elderly couples in which the man looks a generation younger. Hospitals, all glossy and abounding in exits and entrances and eccentric minor characters, seem made to be sitcom sets, and his mother and he laughed at the same places in the script. After the big, black, male nurse insisted on cutting her toenails and washing her ticklish feet, Allen laughed at her account of it, while thinking secretly that it had needed to be done. Her sphere of effective supervision had so shrunk that even her feet were out of it.

Yet she looked, with her white hair flung about unpinned on her pillow, attractively wild, and the brick cityscape out the hospital windows took her back to her own city days, when she and his father had travelled through the state's small cities as his father's employer directed. Allen preferred her city self, the young woman predating his birth, whose aroma of nervous grace clung to the young mother who would take him on the trolley car into town, to buy him a jacket for Sundays, or shoes in which he could see the bones of his feet move in an eerie green space at the bottom of a fluoroscope; or she would take him to a dance lesson, or a piano lesson, or the office of a city doctor redolent of leather and raincoats and Mercurochrome. Sometimes, when he thought back on it, it had been *she* who was going to the doctor, for mysterious female reasons. Her femaleness, with its special natural burdens, was much on her mind. She had talked a lot about birth, the two births she had been present at. At the first, she had been much too big for her little mother, and began life as a twelve-pound near-murderess, after a day and night of inflicting torture. At the second, Allen had been a suitable weight—a little under eight pounds—but up to the moment of parturition she had doubted, somehow, that she could do it, do something so normal and strange as having a baby. She claimed that when he was a few minutes old he had looked her straight in the eye, and for the first time in her life she had felt *right*.

When she was dead and her input had ceased, he wondered about her unhappiness. Had the two of them imagined it? Her life had been no worse than most lives and better, surely, than many. Being a woman had no doubt frustrated her, keeping her at home, tying her to the fortunes of men less intelligent than herself, denying her a career. She was never unconscious of her sex, its embarrassments foremost; she more than once told her son how when she was young and ambitious her menstrual periods laid her low for four or five days each time, a monthly thunderbolt. "Your mother's a real femme" had been his father's sly boast to him. As if she were, secreted in the house the two of them daily left and returned to, a dangerous treasure, glowing but radioactive. Perhaps something timid within her, or even a lazy and self-indulgent something, had held her back from joining the women of her generation who did manage to make their own lives, as schoolteachers and saleswomen if not as artists and executives. This idea—that she was lazy and self-indulgent—came from her; all of Allen's ideas came from her, save the male, boyish idea of *getting away*, of getting out into unheated, unmediated space. Even that, in truth, had been her idea; she had once taken him up on the little hill that overlooked their town and told him that some day he would leave all this, he would fly free.

She was in him not as he had been in her, as a seed becoming a heavy little idol, but as the full web of his perceptions and reactions; he had led his life as an extension of hers, a superior version of hers, and when she died he became custodian of all his little images of her, of his thousand tiny nuanced "understandings" of her, like the words of a once commonplace



"He's all beef!"

• •

BUT SERIOUSLY, FOLKS...
W Miller

AN EARLY VENTRILOQUIST MEETS HIS FUTURE DUMMY

• •

language of which he was now the sole surviving speaker, with no one to speak it to.

FINDING human relations difficult, she had turned to nature for comfort, and now, as he aged, the vast, restless natural presence, the birds and blossoms in their seasons and the chromatic tunings of air and weather, pressed upon him as he paced the suburban acreage where his present wife had installed him. His mother had had a nature lover's hatred of smoking and drinking—her father had come home drunk and cruel from the tavern—and Allen had relinquished both habits years ago. She didn't smoke or drink but had loved to eat, and her middle-aged corpulence embarrassed him as well as her. In the hospital, looking back upon her life, she had voiced only one regret, with a fleeting expression of disgust: "I'm sorry I let myself get fat." But then, in the sentences that followed, as an excuse, she had described the irresistible apple pie à la mode served in the basement cafeteria of a downtown department store where she had once worked for a few Christmases—the delicious crust, the cinnamon on the crust, the creaminess of the vanilla, or even fudge-ripple, ice cream on top. The store had been the classier though smaller of the two major downtown emporiums, both rendered defunct by the rise of suburban malls; inside the revolving doors, gusts of feminine perfume had swamped his youthful senses, and Christmas tinsel shivered everywhere, and carols were chiming from high on the walls, and toward the rear of the first floor, across from the stairway leading down to the clattering, fragrant cafeteria, a lending library had held, each jacket proudly wrapped in cellophane, the new Ellery Queen mystery, the new Thurber collection. Trembling tracks of wire carried money and receipts around the ceiling to an unseen cashier's office and back again—or was this in the big hardware store in the next block? Were pneumatic tubes used here, spitting out with a stunning thump and crash cylinders colorfully padded at both ends with thick felt? His mother would have known; she could have shared with him the vanished texture of this lost world, the world she had brought him to life within, a world of glamorous drugstores, with marble countertops, and movie houses that were exotic islands of air-conditioning, with paper icicles dripping from the marquee. Now he wandered a world without features, just grass and sky, as in Brazil's remotest Mato Grosso, the last of his tribe, silent and hungry.

Hungry—he could not stop eating. After a full dinner, while his wife loaded the dishwasher, he would rummage rather frantically in the breadbox and the cupboards, scarcely conscious of what he was doing, and stuff his mouth with cookies, peanuts, raisins. Mornings when he was at home, in a strange daze he would find himself in the kitchen, not remembering how he got there, and consume half a bag of potato chips, or a safe dish of leftover microwaved peas. Food, all other sirens growing faint and hoarse with age, now sang to him irresistibly—the edginess of it, the friability, the saltiness or sweetness in the moment of first contact with his membranes, the ruminative incorporation of it, like an act of memorization or of mathematical comprehension. Eating was a way, his only remaining way, of intersecting with the world. People sensed it; his Christmas presents tended to be edible—boxes of giant cashews, of pricey nugget conglomerates of chocolate, nuts, and caramel—and at dinner parties he was the one somehow elected to take a second helping, to gratify the hostess. Allen Dow was getting fat. Just five pounds overweight, as he saw it, though he could have lost fifteen without looking thin. Each day proved to be not quite the one in which to eat less. Though he woke to a stomach ache, and vowed moderation, as the sun grew higher the cry from an emptiness within was too sharp, too persistent. As the last of a jar of sugared peanuts, or of a nicely buttered blueberry scone, disappeared into his insides, smothering the suppressed panic there—not so much the fear of death as the sensation that his life was too *small*—he smiled to think that his mother had reached this point at the age of thirty, whereas he was sixty. Girls develop more rapidly than boys.

—JOHN UPDIKE

CHARADES

IT'S fitting that Christmas should devolve to this, its barest bones. The family has begun to seem to Therese like a pack of thespians, anyway; everyone arrives, performs for one another, catches early flights out, to Logan or O'Hare. Probably it's appropriate that a party game should actually appear and insert itself in the guise of a holiday tradition (which it isn't). Usually no one in Therese's family expresses much genuine feeling at all; everyone aims instead—though gamely!—for enactments.

Each year, now, the stage is a new one—their parents, in their restless old age, buying and selling town houses, moving steadily southward from Maine. The real estate is Therese's mother's idea. Since retiring, Therese's father has focussed more on bird feeders; he is learning how to build them. "Who knows what he'll do next?" Her mother sighs. "He'll probably start carving designs into the side of the house."

This year they are in Bethesda, Maryland, near where Andrew, Therese's brother, lives. Andrew works as an electrical engineer and is married to a sweet, pretty, inscrutable nurse named Pam. Pam is pixie-haired and smiley. She freezes hams. She makes Jell-O salads days in advance. She and Andrew are the parents of a one-and-a-half-year-old named Winnie, who already reads.

Reads the reading videos on TV, but reads.

Everyone has divided into teams, four and four, and written the names of famous people, songs, films, plays, books on scraps of wrapping paper torn off the gifts hours earlier. There are another few hours until Therese and her husband Ray's flight, at four-thirty, from National Airport. "Yes," says Therese, "I guess we'll have to forgo the 'Averell Harriman: Statesman for All Seasons' exhibit."

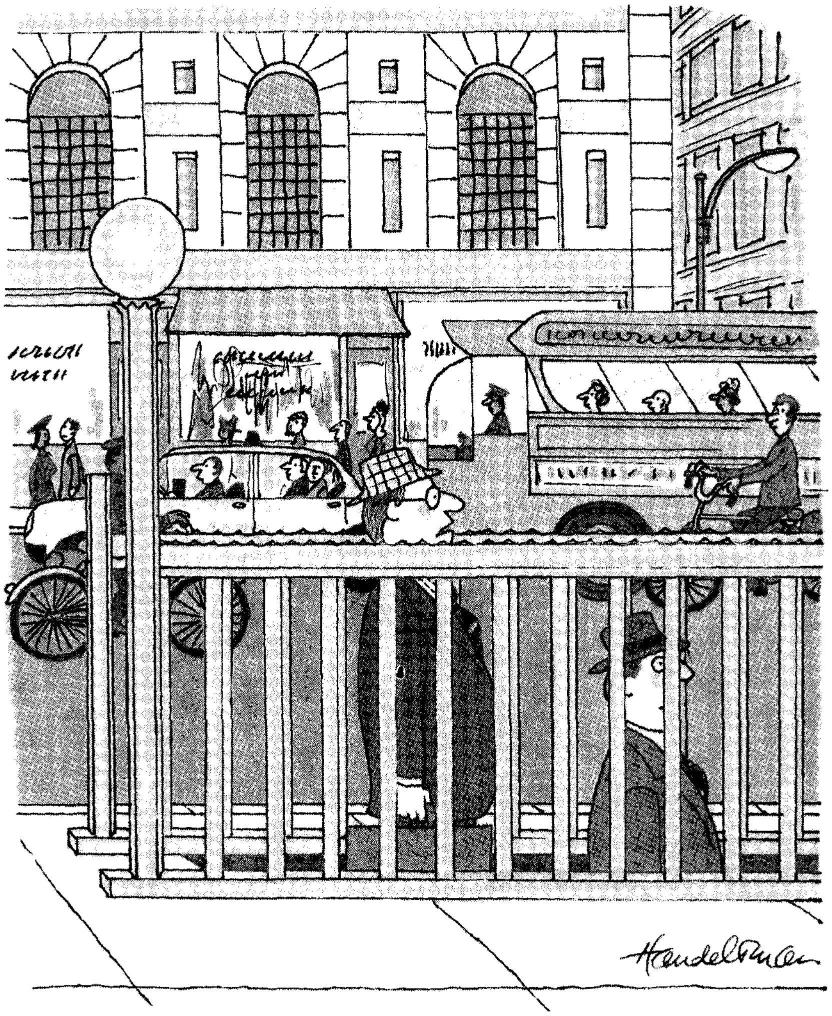
"I don't know why you couldn't catch a later flight," says Therese's sister, Ann. She is scowling. Ann is the youngest, and ten years younger than Therese, who is the oldest, but lately Ann's voice has taken up a prissy and matronly scolding that startles Therese. "Four-thirty," says Ann, pursing her lips and propping her feet up on the chair next to her. "That's a little ridiculous." Her shoes are pointy and Victorian-looking. They are green suède—a cross between a courtesan's and Peter Pan's.

The teams are divided in such a way that Therese and Ray and her parents are on one team, Andrew and Pam, Ann and Tad, Ann's fiancé, on the other. Tad is slender and red-haired, a marketing specialist for Neutrogena. He and Ann have just become engaged. After nearly a decade of casting about in love and work, Ann is going to law school and planning her summer wedding. Since Therese worked for years as a public defender and is now, through a fluky political appointment, a county circuit-court judge, she has assumed that Ann's decision to be a lawyer is a kind of sororal affirmation, that it will somehow mean the two of them will have new things in common, that Ann will have questions for her, observations, forensic things to say. But this seems not to be so. Ann seems not to like law school. She has been preoccupied with trying to hire bands and caterers and to rent a large room in a restaurant. "Ugh," said Therese sympathetically. "Doesn't it make you want to elope?"

Ann shrugged. "I'm trying to figure out how to get everybody from the church to the restaurant in a way that won't wrinkle their outfits and spoil the pictures."

"Really?" asked Therese. "You are?"

The names and titles are put in two big salad bowls, each team receiving the other's bowl. Therese's father goes first. "All right! Everyone ready!" He has always been witty, competitive, tense; games have usually brought out the best and worst in him. These days, however, he seems anxious and elderly. There is pain in his eyes, something sad and unfocussed that sometimes stabs at them—the fear of a misspent life or a flash of uncertainty as to where he's left the keys. He signals that his assigned name is a



"This is not the sort of America I envisioned, Tom—an America in which the middle class has to use public transportation."

famous person. No one could remember how to signal that, and so the family has invented one: a quick, pompous posture, hands on hips, chin in air. Mustering up a sense of drama, Therese's father does this well.

"Famous person!" Everyone shouts it, though of course there is someone who shouts "idiot," to be witty. This time it is Therese's mother.

"Idiot!" she shouts. "Village idiot!"

But her husband has continued signalling the syllables, ignoring her, slapping the fingers of his right hand hard on his left sleeve. The famous person has three names. He is doing the first name, first syllable. He takes out a dollar bill and points to it.

"George Washington," shouts Ray.

"George Washington Carver!" shouts Therese. Therese's father shakes his head angrily, turning the dollar around and pointing at it violently. It bothers him not to be able to control the discourse.

"Dollar bill," says Therese's mother.

"Bill!" says Therese. At this her father begins nodding and pointing at her psychotically. Yes, yes, yes. Now he makes stretching motions with his hands. "Bill, Billy, William," says Therese, and her father points wildly at her again. "William," she says. "William Kennedy Smith."

"Yes!" shouts her father, clapping his hands and throwing his head back as if to praise the ceiling.

"William Kennedy Smith?" Ann is scowling again. "How did you get that from just William?"

"He's been in the news," shrugs Therese. She does not know how to explain Ann's sourness. Perhaps it has something to do with her struggles in law school, or with Therese's being a circuit-court judge, or with the diamond on Ann's finger that is so huge that, to Therese, it seems unkind to wear it in the presence of their mother's, which is, when one gets right down to it, a chip. Earlier, this morning, Ann told Therese that she is going to take Tad's name. "You're going to call yourself Tad?" Therese asked, but Ann was not amused. Ann's sense of humor has never been that flexible, though she always used to like a good sight gag.

Ann explained officiously, "I believe a family is like a team, and everyone on the team should have the same name, like a color. I believe a spouse should be a team player."

THE INSULT

Even here, in a forest in the foothills of a range of mountains, lucent air,
the purest dawn,
a continent and years away from where it happened, it comes back to me,
simmering and stinging,
driving me farther down along the pathway to a hidden brook I hadn't
realized was there.

The thrust came first, accurate, deft, to the quick, its impetus and reasons
never grasped.
Then my pain, my sullen, shocked retort, harsh, but with nothing like an
equivalent rancor.
Then the subsiding: nothing resolved, only let slide; nothing forgiven,
only put by.

The stream bends here under a bridge, its voice lifts more loudly from the
rocks of its bed.
The quickly hardening light slants in over the tough, sparse wild grasses
on the far hill.
Wind rattling the aspens; a hawk so tiny it seems almost a toy hovering in
a socket of updraft.

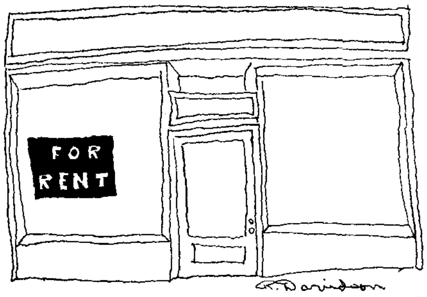
Even now, I have no urgent wish to tell it, I know it so well—why have
to recite it again?
What keeps bringing us back to those fissures so tenaciously holding our
impotent suffering?
Are there deeper wounds in us than we know; might grief itself be
communion and solace?

So many footprints crossing and recrossing the trail through the boulders
edging the bank,
the swarms of apparently purposeless insects ticking their angular circuits
over the water.
The song of the water, the mindless air, the hawk beyond sight, the silent
cry of its prey.

—C. K. Williams

• •

Therese no longer has any idea who Ann is. Therese had liked Ann better when she was eight, with her blue pencil case and a strange, loping run that came from having one leg an inch and a half longer than the other. Ann was attractive as a child. She was awkward and inquiring. She was cute. Or so she had seemed to Therese, who was mostly in high school and college then, slightly depressed and studying too much, destroying her already bad eyes, so that now she wears glasses so thick her eyes swim in a cloudy way behind them. As she stood listening to Ann talk about team players, Therese smiled and nodded, but she felt preached at, as if she were a messy, wayward hippie. She wanted to grab her sister, throw herself upon her, embrace her, shut her up. She tried to understand Ann's dark and worried nuptial words but, instead, found herself recalling the pratfalls she used to perform for Ann—Therese could take a fall straight on the face—in order to make her laugh.



Ann's voice was going on. "When you sit too long, the bodices bunch up . . ."

Therese mentally measured the length of her body and the space in front of her and wondered if she could do it. Of course she could. Of course. But *would* she? And then suddenly she knew she would. She let her hip twist and fell straight forward, her arm at an angle, her mouth in a whoop. She had learned to do this in drama club when she was fifteen. She hadn't been pretty, and it was a means of getting the boys' attention. She landed with a thud.

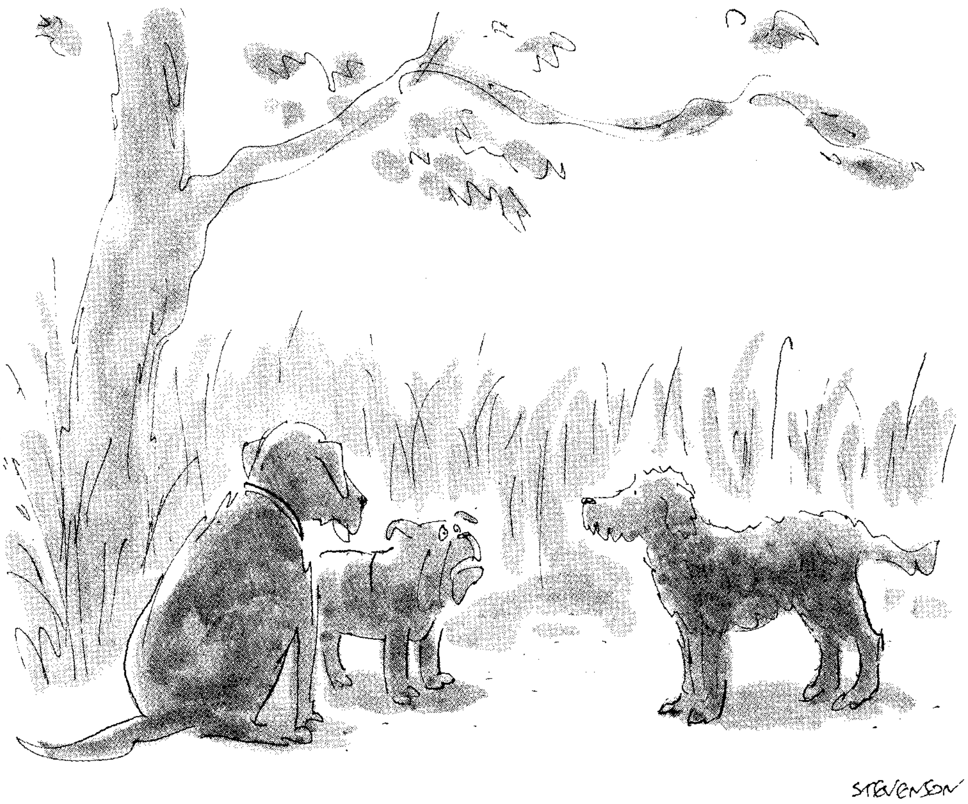
"You still do that?" asked Ann with incredulity and disgust. "You're a judge and you still *do* that?"

"Sort of," said Therese from the floor, feeling around for her glasses.

NOW it is the team player herself standing up to give clues to her team. Ann looks at the name on her scrap of paper and makes a slight face. "I need a consultation," she says in a vaguely repelled way that perhaps she imagines is sophisticated. She brings the scrap of wrapping paper over to Therese's team. "What is this?" Ann asks. There in Ray's handwriting is a misspelled "Arachnophobia."

"It's a movie," says Ray, apologetically. "Did I spell it wrong?"

"I think you did, honey," says Therese, leaning in to look at it. "You got some of the 'o's and 'a's mixed up." Ray is dyslexic. When the roofing business slows in the winter months, instead of staying in with a book, or going to therapy, he drives to cheap natinées of bad movies. "Flicks," he alls them. Or "cliffs" when he's making n of himself. Ray misspells everying. Is it "input" or "imput"? Is it verse," "adverse," or "adversed"? s roofing business has a reputation being reasonable, but a little slipd and second rate. Nonetheless, erese thinks he is great. He is never descending. He cooks an infinite ety of dishes with chicken. He is nt and capable, and claims almost night, in his husbandly way, to Therese the sexiest woman he's known. Therese likes *that. She is having an affair* with a young nt D.A. in the prosecutor's office, is a limited thing—like taking oves off, clapping her hands, tting the gloves back on again. iet and, she believes, undiscov- It is nothing, except that it is n a man who is not dyslexic, and once in a while, by God, she needs that.



"Speaking personally, I haven't had my day, and I've never met any dog who has."

• •

ANN is acting out "Arachnophobia," the whole concept, rather than working syllable by syllable. She stares into her fiancé's eyes, wiggling her fingers about and then jumping away in a fright, but he doesn't get it. She waves her Christmas-manicured nails at him more furiously. One of the nails has a little Santa Claus painted on it. Ann's black hair is cut severely in sharp, expensive lines, and her long, drapey clothes hang from her thin shoulders as if still on a hanger. She looks starved and rich and enraged. Everything seems struggled toward and forced, a little cartoonish, like the green shoes, which may be why her fiancé suddenly shouts out, "Little Miss Muffet!" Ann turns now to Andrew, motioning at him encouragingly, as if to punish Tad. The awkward lope of her childhood has taken on a chiropracticed slink. Therese turns back toward her own team, toward her father, who is still muttering something about William Kennedy Smith. "A woman shouldn't be in a bar at three o'clock in the morning. That's all there is to it."

"Dad, that's ludicrous," whispers Therese, not wanting to interrupt the game. "Bars are open to everyone. Public Accommodations Law."

"I'm not talking about the cold legalities," he says chastisingly. He has never liked lawyers, and is baffled by his daughters. "I'm talking about a long-understood moral code." Her father is of that Victorian sensibility that, deep down, respects prostitutes more than it does women in general.

"Long-understood moral code?" Therese frowns at him gently. "Dad, you're seventy-five years old."

"Arachnophobia!" Andrew shouts, and he and Ann rush together and do high fives.

Therese's father makes a quick, little spitting sound, then crosses his legs and looks the other way. Therese glances over at her mother, and her mother is smiling at her conspiratorially, behind Therese's father's back, making little donkey ears with her fingers, her sign when she thinks he's being a jackass.

"All right, forget William Kennedy Smith. Your turn, doll," says Therese's father to her mother. Therese's mother gets up slowly but bends gleefully to pick up the scrap of paper. She looks at it, walks to the center of the room, and shoves the paper scrap into her pocket. She faces the other team and makes the sign for a famous person.

"Wrong team, Mom," says Therese, and her mother says "Whoops," and turns around. She repeats the famous-person stance.

"Famous person," says Ray encouragingly. Therese's mother nods. She pauses for a bit, to think. Then she spins around, throws her arms up into the air, collapses forward onto the floor, then backward, hitting her head on the stereo.

"Marjorie, what are you doing?" asks Therese's father. Her mother is lying there on the floor, laughing.

"Are you O.K.?" Therese asks. Her mother nods, still laughing quietly.

"Fall," says Ray. "Dizziness. Dizzy Gillespie."

Therese's mother shakes her head.

"Epilepsy," says Therese.

"Explode," says her father, and her mother nods. "Explosion. Bomb. Robert Oppenheimer!"

"That's it." Her mother sighs. She has a little trouble getting back up. She is seventy, and her knees are jammed with arthritis.

"You need help, Mom?" Therese asks.

"Yeah, Mom, you need help?" asks Ann, who has risen and walked toward the center of the room, to take charge, in her way.

"I'm O.K.," Therese's mother sighs, with a quiet, slightly faked giggle, and walks stiffly back to her seat.

"That was great, Ma," says Therese.

Her mother smiles proudly. "Well, thank you!"

AFTER that there are many rounds, and every time Therese's mother gets anything like Dom DeLuise, or Tom Jones, she does her bomb imitation again, whipping herself into a spastic frenzy and falling, then rising stiffly again to great applause. Pam brings Winnie in from her nap, and everyone oohs and ahs at the child's sweet, sleep-streaked face. "There she is," coos Aunt Therese. "You want to come see Grandma be a bomb?"

"It's your turn," says Andrew impatiently.

"Mine?" asks Therese.

"I think that's right," says her father. She gets up, digs in the bowl, unfolds a scrap of wrapping paper. It says "Eckels Street." "I need a consultation here. Andrew, I think this is your writing."

"O.K.," he says, rising, and together they step into the foyer.

"Is this a TV show?" whispers Therese. "I don't watch much TV."

"No," says Andrew with a vague smile.

"What is it?"

He shifts his weight, reluctant to tell her. Perhaps it is because he works with Top Secret documents from the Defense Department; he was recently promoted from the just plain Secret ones. As an engineer, he consults, reviews, approves. His gaze is suppressed, annoyed. "It's the name of a street two blocks from here." There's a surly and defensive curve to his mouth.

"But that's not the title of anything famous."

"It's a place. I thought we could do names of places."

"It's not a famous place."

"So?"

"I mean, we all could write down the names of streets in our neighborhoods, near where we work, a road we walked down once on the way to a store."

"You're the one who said we could do places."

"I did? Well, all right, then, what did I say was the sign for a place? We don't have a sign for places."

"I don't know. You figure it out," he says. A saucy rage is all over him now. Is this from childhood? Is this from hair loss? Once, Therese and Andrew had been close. But she has no idea who he is anymore. She has only a theory: an electrical engineer victimized by high-school guidance counsellors working in conjunction with the Pentagon to recruit, train, and militarize all the boys with high math S.A.T. scores. "From M.I.T. to M.I.A.," as Andrew once put it himself. "A military-industrial asshole." But she can no longe find that satirical place in him. Las year, at least, they had joked abo their growing up. "I scarcely remen ber Dad reading to us," she'd said

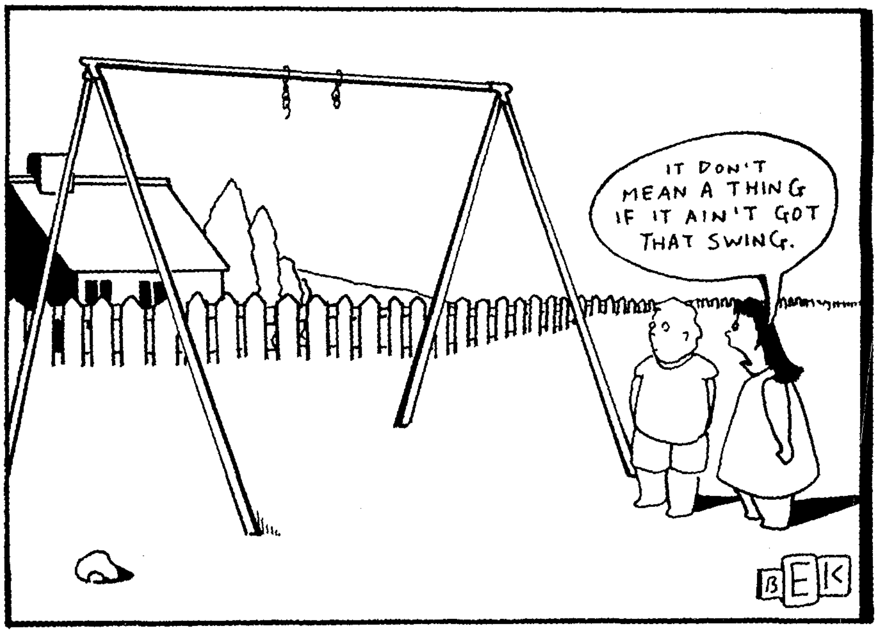
"Sure he read to us," said Andre "You don't remember him reading us? You don't remember him read to us silently from the Boston *Glol*

Now Therese scans his harden face for a joke, a glimmer, a bit of Andrew and Ann have seemed c and Therese feels wistful, wonde when and how that happened. S a little jealous. The only expre she can get from Andrew is a de one. He is a traffic cop. She speeding flower child.

Don't you know I'm a judge? T wants to ask. A judge via a fluk tical appointment, sure. A jud a reputation around the courth light sentencing, true. A judge having an affair that mildly t her character—O.K. A softie touch, but a judge nonethele

Instead she says, "Do yo I just pick another one?"

"Fine by me," Andrew strides brusquely back into room.


IT DON'T MEAN A THING IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING.

Oh, well, Therese thinks. It is her new mantra. It usually calms her better than om, which she also tries. Om is where the heart is. Om is not here. Oh, well. Oh, well. When she was first practicing law, to combat her courtroom stage fright she would chant to herself, *Everybody loves me, everybody loves me*, and, when that didn't work especially well, she'd switch to *Kill! Kill! Kill!*

"We're doing another one," announces Andrew, and Therese picks another one.

A book and a movie. She opens her palms, prayerlike, for a book. She cranks one hand in the air for a movie. She pulls on her ear and points at a lamp. "Sounds like 'light,' " Ray says. His expression is open and helpful. "Bite, kite, fight, night—"

Therese signals yes, that's it.

"Night," repeats Ray.

"Tender Is the Night," says her mother.

"Yes!" says Therese and bends to kiss her mother on the cheek. Her mother smiles exuberantly, her face in a kind of burst; she loves affection, is hungry and grateful for it. When she was younger she was a frustrated, mean mother, so she is pleased when her children act as if they didn't remember.

It is Andrew's turn. He stands before his own team, staring at the red scrap in his hand. He ponders it, shakes his head, then looks back toward Therese. "This must be yours," he says with a smirk that may be a good-natured smirk. Is there such a thing? Therese hopes so.

"You need a consultation?" Therese gets up to look at the writing; it reads "Surrey with the Fringe on Top."

"Yup, that's mine," she says.

"Come here," Andrew says, and the two of them go back down the corridor toward the foyer again. This time Therese notices the photographs her parents have hung there. Photographs of their children, of weddings and Winnie, though all the ones of Therese seem to her to be aggressively unflattering, advertising an asymmetry in her expression, or the magnified haziness of her eyes, or her hair in a dry, peppery frizz. Surely there must have been better pictures. The ones of Andrew, of Ann, of Tad, of Pam and Winnie are sunlit, posed, wholesome, pretty. The ones of Therese seem slightly disturbed, as if her parents were convinced she is insane.

"We'll stand here by the psychotic-looking pictures of me," says Therese.

"Ann sent her those."

"Oh," says Therese.

"She included the frames and the little hangers. Look," Andrew says, getting back to the game, "I've never heard of this." He waves the scrap of paper, as if it were a gum wrapper.

"You haven't? It's a song. 'Chicks and ducks and geese better scurry, When I take you out in the surrey . . .'?"

"No."

"No?" She keeps going. She looks up at him romantically. " 'When I take you out in the surrey, When I take you out in the surrey with the fringe on—' "

"No," Andrew interrupts emphatically.

"Hmm. Well, don't worry. Everyone on your team will know it."

The righteous indignation is returning to his face. "If *I* don't know it, what makes you think *they'll* know it?" Perhaps this is because of his work, the techno-secrecy of it. *He* knows: *they* don't.

"They'll know it," Therese says. "I guarantee." She starts to turn to leave.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa," says Andrew. The gray-pink of rage is back in his skin. What has he become? She hasn't a clue. He is successfully Top Secret. He is classified information. "I'm not doing this. I refuse."

Therese stares at him. Perhaps this is the assertiveness he can't exercise on the job. Perhaps here, where he is no longer a cog-though-a-prized-cog, he can insist on certain things. The Cold War is over, she wants to say. But what has replaced it is this: children who have turned against one another, now that the gods—or were they only guards?—have fled. "O.K., fine," she says. "I'll make up another."

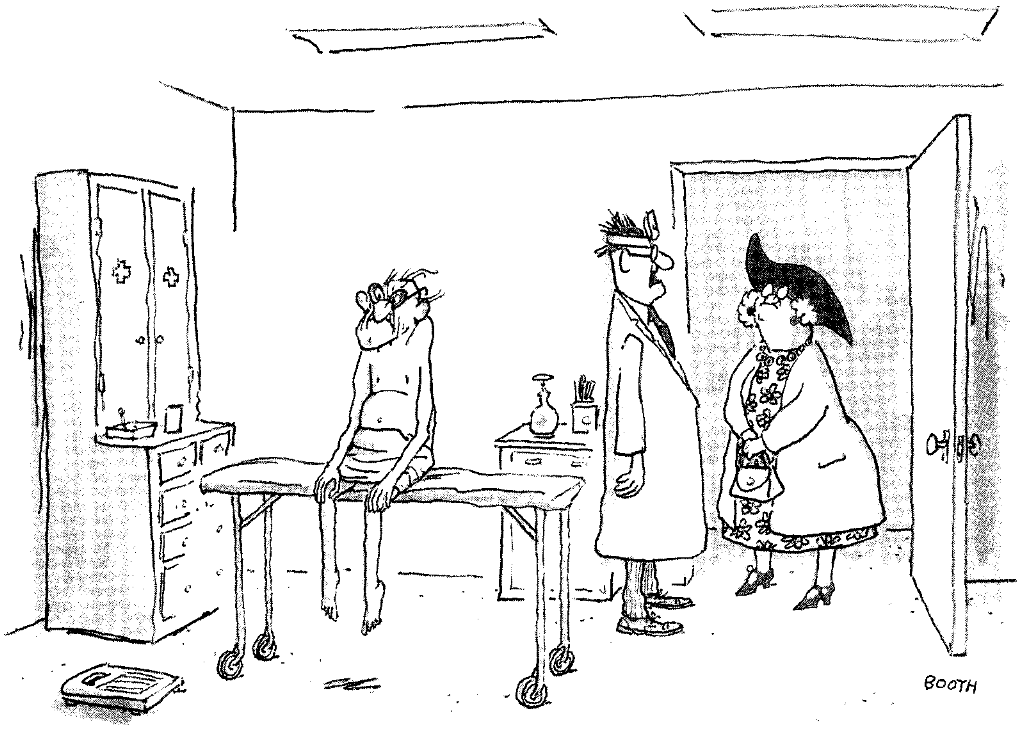
"We're doing another one," announces Andrew triumphantly as they come back into the living room. He waves the paper scrap. "Have any of you ever even heard of a song called 'Surrey with the Fringe on Top'?"

"Sure," says Pam, looking at him in a puzzled way. No doubt he seems different to her around the holidays.

"You have?" He seems a bit flummoxed. He looks at Ann. "Have you?" Ann is reluctant to break ranks with him, but says quietly, "Yeah."

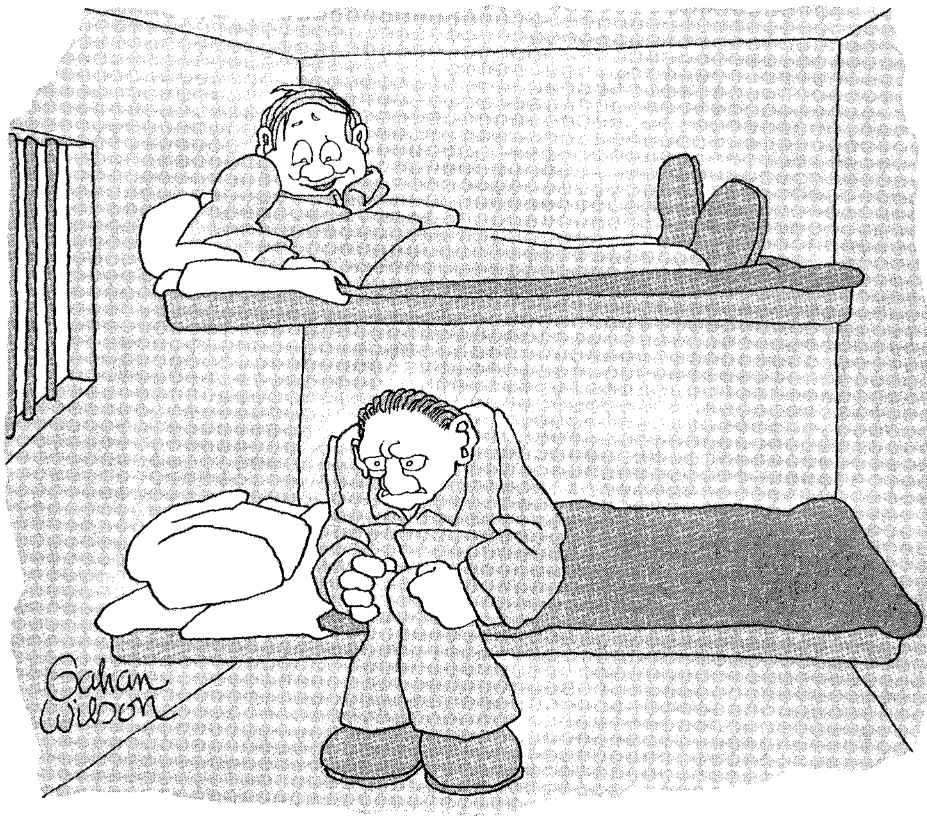
"Tad, how about you?" he asks.

Tad has been napping off and on, his head thrown back against the sofa,



"There has been a sharp increase in his cantankerousness."

• •



"Well, anyhow, it sure is handy having my broker right here in my cell!"

• •

but now he jerks awake. "Uh, yeah," he says.

"Tad's not feeling that well," says Ann.

In desperation, Andrew turns toward the other team. "And you all know it, too?"

"I don't know it," says Ray. He is the only one. He doesn't know a show tune from a chauffeur. In a way, that's what Therese likes about him.

Andrew sits back down, refusing to admit defeat. "Ray didn't know it," he says.

Therese can't think of a song, so she writes "Clarence Thomas," and hands the slip back to Andrew. As he ponders his options, Therese's mother gets up and comes back holding Dixie cups and a bottle of cranberry drink. "Who would like some cranberry juice?" she says, and starts pouring. She hands the cups out carefully to everyone. "We don't have the wineglasses unpacked, so we'll have to make do."

"We'll have to make do" is one of their mother's favorite expressions, acquired during the Depression and made indelible during the war. When they were little, Therese and Andrew used to look at each other and say, "We'll have to make doo-doo," but when Therese glances over at him now, nothing registers. He has forgotten. He is thinking only of the charade.

Ray sips his drink a little sloppily, and a drop spills on the chair. Therese hands him a napkin, and he dabs at the upholstery with it, but it is Ann who is swiftly up, out to the kitchen, and back with a cold, wet cloth, wiping at Ray's chair in a kind of rebuke.

"Oh, don't worry," her mother is saying.

"I think I've got it," says Ann solemnly.

"I'm doing my clues now," says Andrew impatiently. Therese looks over at Winnie who—calm and observant in her mother's arms, a plump, incontinent Buddha who knows all her letters—seems like the sanest person in the room.

Andrew is making a sweeping gesture with his arm, something meant to include everyone in the room.

"People," says Tad.

"Family," says Pam.

Ann has come back from the kitchen and sits down on the sofa. "Us," she says.

Andrew smiles and nods.

"Us. Thom-us," says Ann. "Clarence Thomas."

"Yes," says Andrew with a clap. "What was the time on that?"

"Thirty seconds," says Tad.

"Well, I guess he's on the tip of everyone's tongue," says Therese's mother.

"I guess so," says Therese.

"It was interesting to see all those black people from Yale," says Therese's mother. "All sitting there in the Senate caucus room. I'll bet their parents were proud."

Ann did not get into Yale. "What I don't like," she says, "is all these black people who don't like whites. They're so hostile. I see it all the time in law school. It's the blacks, not the whites, who are angry."

"Imagine that," says Ray.

"Yes. Imagine," says Therese. Something bursts in her. "You know what else I don't like? I don't like all these gay men who have gotten just a little too sombre and butch. You know what I mean? Where is the mincing and *high-spirited* shrieking of yesteryear? I say, where is the *gaiety* in gay? It's all so confusing and inconvenient! You can't tell who's who without a goddam playbill!" She stands up and looks at Ray. It is time to go. She lost her judicial temperament hours ago. She fears she is going to do another pratfall, only this time she will break something. She will break furnishings. She will break bones. Already she sees herself carted out on a stretcher, brought toward the airport, and toward home, saying the final words she has to say to her family, has always had to say to her family. Sounds like "could cry."

"Goodbye!"

"Goodbye!"

"Goodbye!"

"Goodbye!"

"Goodbye!"

"Goodbye!"

But first Ray must do his charade, which is Confucius. "O.K. I'm ready," he says, and begins to wander around the living room in a wild-eyed daze, looking as confused as possible, groping at the bookcases, placing his palm to his brow. And, in that moment, Therese thinks how good-looking he is and how kind, and how she loves nobody else in the world even half as much.

—LORRIE MOORE

ANNALS OF SCIENCE

A SILENT CHILDHOOD—II

IN November of 1970, a thirteen-year-old girl came to live at Childrens Hospital of Los Angeles. Since the age of two, Genie (her scientific pseudonym) had been kept under restraints in a bedroom of a modest house in the Los Angeles suburb of Temple City. Her jailers were her parents, called here by their first names, Clark and Irene. Clark committed suicide soon after Genie's discovery; Irene, who was nearly blind and had engineered her daughter's escape, was absolved in court of responsibility for the girl's imprisonment.

Having lived for eleven of her thirteen years in virtual solitary confinement, Genie was unable to talk when she arrived at the hospital. She quickly became an object of intense interest to a host of doctors and scientists, among them Howard Hansen, the head of the hospital's Psychiatry Division; the division's chief psychologist, David Rigler, who proposed to direct a multifaceted study of Genie, to be funded by the National Institute of Mental Health; James Kent, the doctor in charge of her case; Jay Shurley, a psychiatrist at the University of Oklahoma who specialized in cases of extreme isolation; and Susan Curtiss, a graduate student at the University of California at Los Angeles, whose field was language acquisition in children, and whose doctoral dissertation on Genie became the child's definitive scientific biography.

CURTISS's dissertation makes no mention of the most significant event of Genie's first summer of freedom. But it was documented by Jean Butler, Genie's teacher at Childrens Hospital's Rehabilitation Center, with whom Genie had developed a strong rapport. Butler's account was written in the form of a diary:

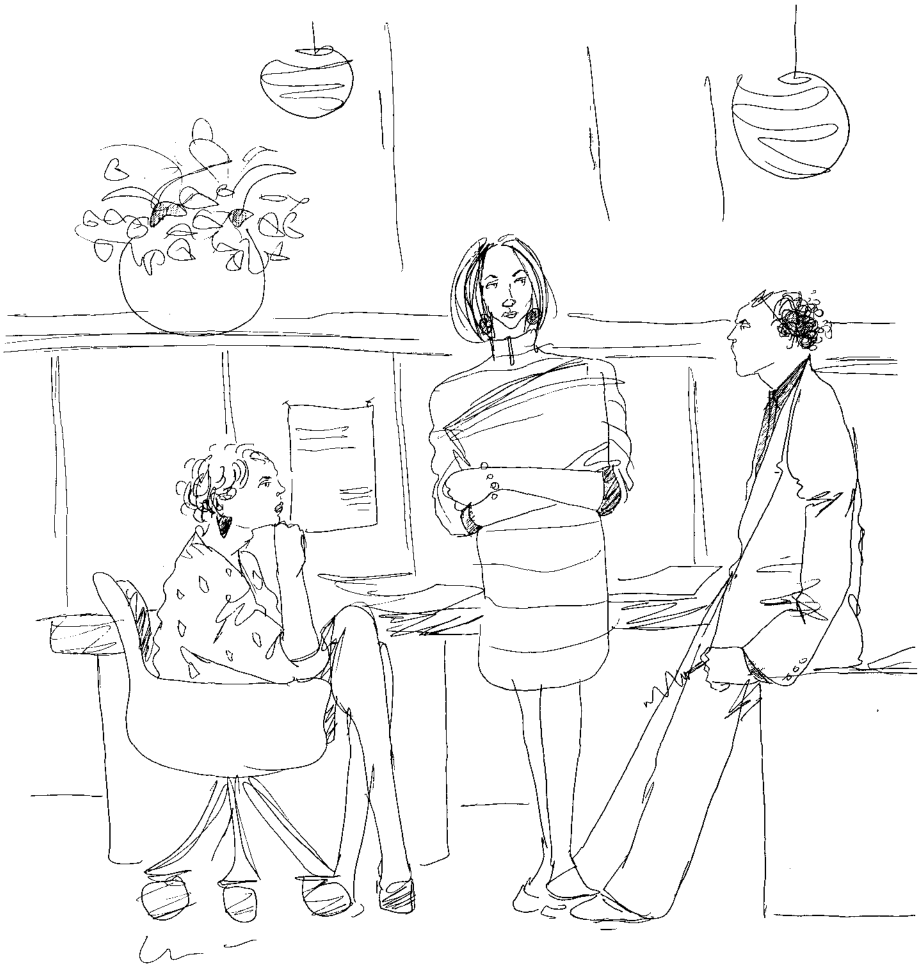
> June 23, 1971—I signed the necessary papers at the Hospital in order to be a volunteer and take Genie on field trips and to my home.

"Home" was a two-story house a block from the Wilshire Country Club, on Cahuenga Boulevard—a house that seemed somewhat beyond the means of a schoolteacher with an income of thirteen thousand dollars a year. But Jean Butler was doing all right. She had recently turned down an offer amounting to almost a quarter of a million dollars for twenty-five acres she owned near the Leisure World retirement village in Orange County. She came from a wealthy Midwestern family; she was unmarried, and she supplemented her income occasionally by writing children's books. Her house had a guest bedroom downstairs, where Genie could sleep.

Not long after she had signed the papers, Butler called the hospital with dire news: she was ill, and her illness had been diagnosed as rubella. Genie had been exposed, and though she never came down with the disease she was at that point presumed to be contagious. Rubella is a havoc wreaker in schools, but in the light of Genie's past there was no humane way to isolate her. The obvious solution was to quarantine her with her teacher, and on July 7th she moved in.

"It was apparent that Genie was happy to be in my home," Butler wrote in her journal. But Butler herself was less than happy to entertain house calls from various members of what she termed the Genie Team. Butler's disparagement of Genie's other caretakers had been evident ever since the May conference at the hospital, where scientists from around the country had gathered to debate Genie's future. She found Susan Curtiss inept, David Rigler self-important, James Kent overpermissive, and all of them ambitious and insensitive.

> July 8—Student Susan Curtiss was in my home recording speech and attempting to amuse Genie. However, she followed the child and hovered over her most of the day. She had a notebook handy and discussed Genie's speech and lack of it and her eating habits in a critical manner in front of her. . . . That



"How about a nice, big coffee-table book about women?"

evening Dr. Rigler phoned and I told him that the "help" he was giving me in the house *was not helping me.*

James Kent may have annoyed Butler the most. Among Genie's abiding enthusiasms was a fondness for masturbation. She was uninhibited by any concept of modesty, and was frequently an embarrassment in public. Butler believed that Kent, unwilling to constrain a child whose life had been disfigured by constraint, encouraged her in her habit—an allegation that Kent has denied.

The care and feeding that Genie received in the hospital had spurred her development, and not just in behavior. Among other physical transformations, she began developing breasts. Signs of her sexual maturity were splendid news to Curtiss and her faculty adviser, Victoria Fromkin. To properly test the critical-period hypothesis—the theory of the neuropsychologist Eric Lenneberg that a first language can be learned only during childhood—they needed to observe the language-learning attempts of someone past puberty. It was a heartrending serendipity. David Rigler once showed me calendars he had made to follow Genie's progress in conquering her bed-wetting. They illustrated eloquently the child's awful dilemma. There amid the dry days and the wet days were marked the days she had her menses. She was getting her period and being toilet-trained, all at the same time.

"I expressed my fear to Dr. Kent that Genie was being experimented with too much and not being allowed to relax," Butler recounted in her journal. "He said this was necessary." Butler did not feel that she was alone in her concerns:

> July 13—Sue Omansky of the Department of Public Social Services visited my home. . . . [She] was extremely critical of putting this child on display as a guinea pig and objected to the U.C.L.A. student hovering and jotting down everything said by the child. Miss Omansky expressed her belief that these men were using Genie to gain fame.

As the summer progressed, the tensions between Butler and the scientists sometimes erupted into full-volume arguments. Her house became the field for a jurisdictional battle of Titans. Sue Omansky, in her position with the D.P.S.S., was Genie's de-facto guardian. Her department had little interest in making Genie accessible to researchers from Childrens Hospital; still, the two institutions were bound together in Genie's name. They had been conferring for months about how to get the child out of the Rehabilitation Center and into a private home. Now the rubella had forced the issue. Butler applied to the D.P.S.S. to become Genie's foster parent, and Omansky felt that the teacher's home was suitable for a permanent placement. But her D.P.S.S. supervisors, after their discussions with Childrens Hospital, had reservations. For one thing, it was against hospital policy to place patients in the homes of people who worked at the hospital. For another, it was felt that Genie would be better off in a home with a foster father as well as a foster mother.

Butler had a handy solution to that problem: she decided to ask her lover to move in. He was Floyd Ruch, a psychologist who had taught for thirty years at the University of Southern California and had written a seminal textbook, "Psychology and Life." He was well-to-do and well thought of, but he was not unencumbered. Ruch was separated from his wife and was living alone, two blocks from Butler's house. In effect, though, he was already on the scene—enough so to be drawn into some of the quarrelling between Butler and the Genie Team. Butler's journal recounts a disagreement between her and David Rigler that turned into a midnight shouting match on the front walk, with Ruch rising to break it up. (Rigler doesn't recall the incident. "Oh, something like that might have happened," he told me. "We did argue about administrative stuff. But not shouting. And not at midnight.")

> July 14—I asked Dr. Kent to have Miss Curtiss removed from my home, as she was no help but completely untrained and inexperienced with children and had no awareness of safety factors. Dr. Kent said it was necessary to have her here and the need for phonetic recording of speech attempts was more important than her lack of ability in helping with Genie. I pointed out that Genie did not talk around Miss Curtiss.

A few days after that entry, at the height of the conflict, came the episode

BEVERAGES
SODA-SELTZER-SYRUP
SODA
SELTZER
SYRUP
Stuart Leeds

PROSPECT PARK, HOLY WEEK

The mean swan has returned to the pond;
the white ducks are back; the wild ducks are out
in the grass, bobbing between dark tufts of ramp;
the drake's green head gleams like the jewel
from a cocktail ring. A pale jet stream
streaks the sky, a stretch mark on a mother's belly,
and the late-afternoon sun is a bronze fruit
that glazes the pond with its bronze juice.
The black boys on mountain bikes, who pedal fast
as they can down the hill, have drunk that juice,
and the flushed white men who jog in their college shirts
have drunk that juice, and the cyclist with dreadlocks
and shiny black tights pedals his silent racing bike
like that juice was sweet. And you can smell
sweat in your hair and wet earth on the wind
that stirs dried oak leaves and the sheer chartreuse
of the willow. Through the bare trees,
the old Quaker tombstones flash in the sun
like a mound of polished fingernails.
The squirrels sit up on their haunches,
and the magnolia's black branches
shock the air with their waxy, white blooms.
The meadow has blossomed into
all the colors of sweatshirts,
and the football is back, soaring high
above all of us, the pit of that fruit.

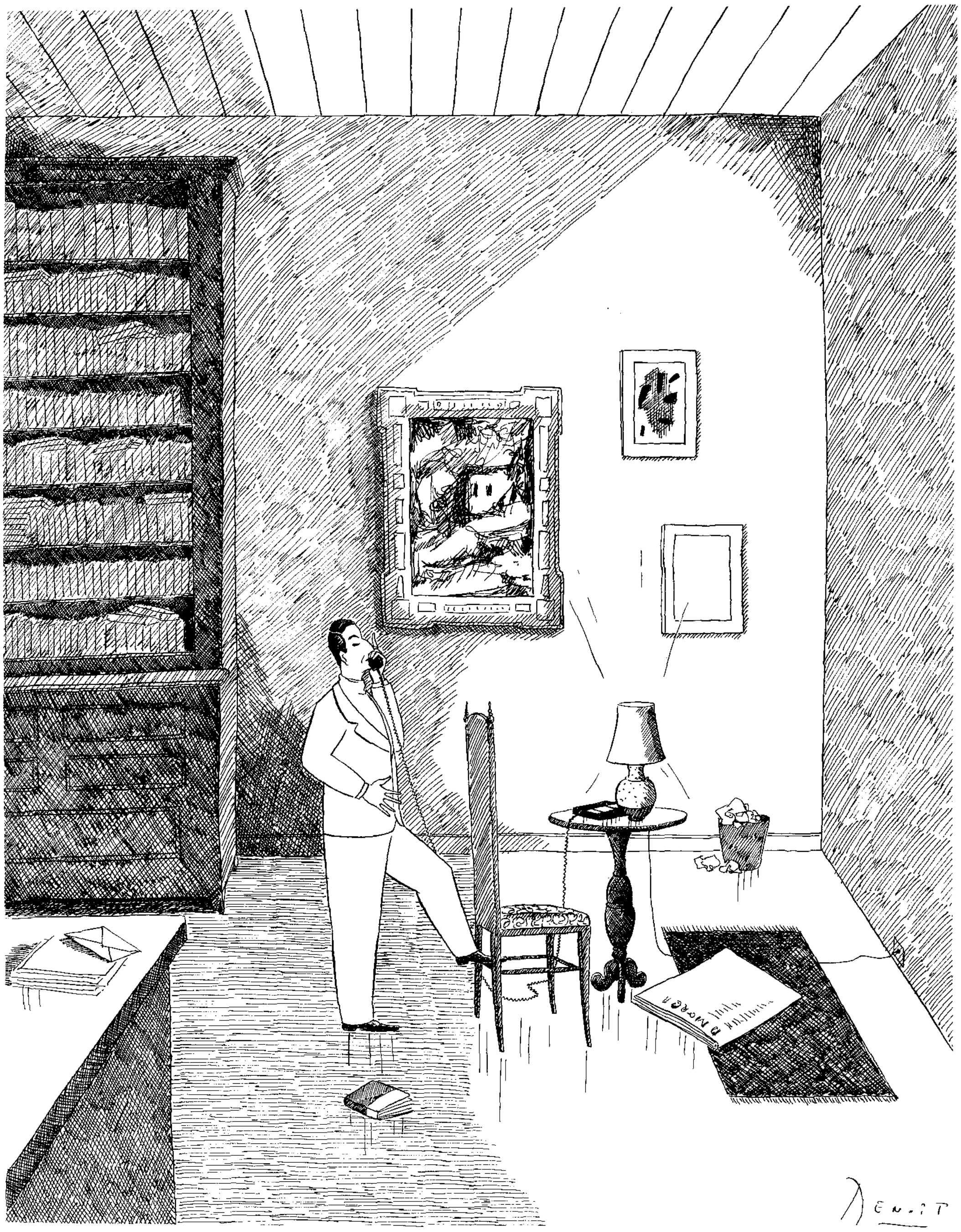
—JULIA KASDORF

• •

of the puppy. Rigler relates it this way: "At one point, I visited Jean Butler's home and had a golden-retriever puppy with me, and Genie must have seen the puppy through the window, because according to Butler she got very upset. Now, this puppy was only ten or twelve weeks old. It was just a fur ball, and it wasn't up against the window, it was still in the yard, but Genie must have been scared of it."

Butler's version is more vivid:

> July 20—Dr. Rigler phoned and said his wife had picked up a puppy and he would like to bring it over to show Genie. I asked him to wait a few days. He said he was anxious. I then said to please keep the dog in his car and let Genie peer through the window. . . .
>
> At about 8:00 P.M., Genie and I were folding sheets and the task was giving her great satisfaction. . . . Just then Dr. Rigler came. . . . He took her hand and led her to the front door, opened it, saying, "Come with me, Genie, I have something to show you." By this time Mrs. Rigler had taken the dog out of the car and placed it on the lawn. From the porch Genie saw the dog and ran back in the house, slamming the door violently. She got in my bed. . . . For a while she watched the dog through the front window. The Riglers left and Genie stayed in my bed for two hours, frequently getting up to go to the bathroom. She said, "No dog," and "Scared." She slept less than two hours that night. At 2:30 she came in to me and took my hand and led me to her bed. I sat by her for two hours while she repeated "Scared."

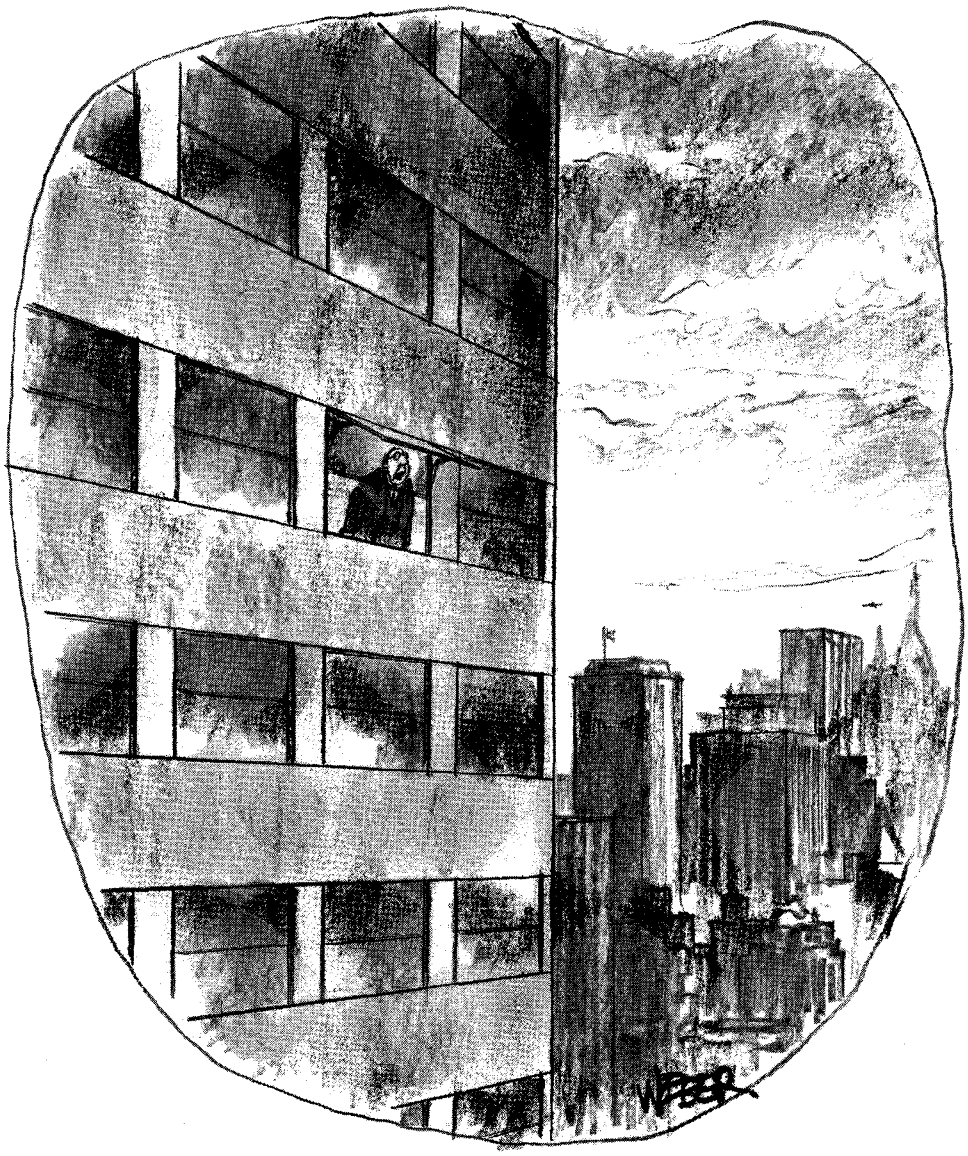


The artist tries to explain to a TV reporter why he declines to take part in a talk show.

• •

Genie's aversion to dogs was famous even before the incident with Rigler's puppy; Rigler himself had witnessed it during his earliest walks around town with Genie. After one canine confrontation, Rigler had commented to Butler that he had never seen such fear in any child. "The thing Genie would do when she saw a cat or dog, she would climb you like a pole," he told me. "Or she would desert you altogether. You'd look around and she'd be heading for the white line in the center of the road, because it was equidistant from the yards on both sides. And she was bright enough to know that a dog behind a fence was behind a fence, but a cat behind a fence was not behind a fence at all." Floyd Ruch, in particular, spent some time trying to get Genie over her alarm. He watched episodes of "Lassie" with her, and bought her a battery-operated toy dog that barked and wagged its tail. Only years later did he and Butler and the Riglers learn just how deep Genie's fear ran, and why.

Through July and into August, the haggling continued. Butler struggled to control the intrusions of scientists into her home and, at the same time, struggled to be numbered officially among them. She requested a thirty-eight-per-cent raise in pay, and she also asked to be acknowledged alongside the researchers in their scientific



"Shane, come back!"

• •

papers. Genie seemed to be the only one growing more relaxed. Photographs of her taken at Butler's house show her animated, cheerful, composed, content. She sits on a hassock with one tanned, hospital-braceleted wrist cradled in her other hand, and looks up with such confidence, so completely self-aware, that it is hard to believe she is not a normal child. In a picture taken on the back porch, her ponytails have gone sodden from playing under the hose, and she tosses toward the camera a grin of unbridled delight. She also went to the beach, where she learned to sample, at least to ankle depth, the terrifying enticements of the Pacific Ocean.

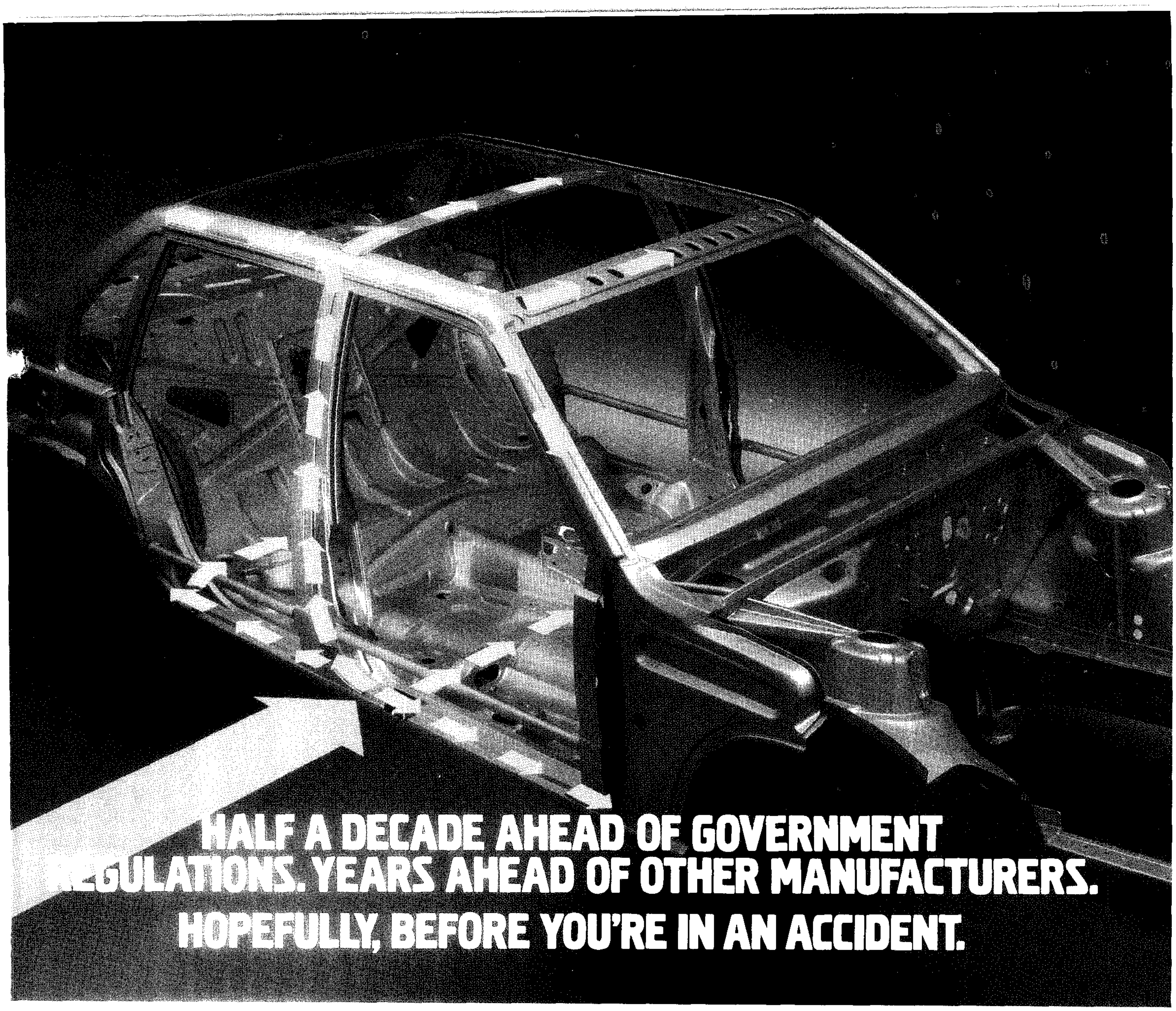
Butler reviewed Genie's progress that summer in her diary: she claimed that Genie was wetting the bed less often, with thirty dry nights out of thirty-seven, and that her masturbation had declined as she gained interest in other activities. Along with everything else, Butler wrote, Genie was talking: "The quality of her speech improved and the quantity increased at least tenfold. . . . I was able to get Genie to say 'Yes' appropriately. This she had never done before. Also, I was able to get Genie to verbalize when she was angry, by saying the word 'angry' and making a hitting motion in the air or hitting certain inanimate objects (such as a large plastic inflatable clown). This was her first verbalization of her hostilities and anger." In a letter to Jay Shurley, who had studied Genie when she was first rescued and was now back at the University of Oklahoma wondering about the summer's events, Butler wrote:

> You asked me about Genie's speech here. The last two weeks Floyd called her "My little yakker." He often said, "You're going to grow up and be a yakker like Jeanie." She talked one evening for 45 minutes after a trip to the pet shop to get four fish. During the day we talked and even argued about ¼ of the time. She was using two- and three-word sentences. She used the negative appropriately, and when I told her that she would have to come inside if she did not stop putting water on the service porch she said "No come in." . . . She often described an object with two adjectives . . . "one black kitty" . . . "four orange fish" . . . "bad orange fish—no eat—bad fish," the longest expressed thought. I'll tell you the saga of the fish and their demise when you are here.

Butler's self-congratulatory assessment of Genie's mental state was borne out by an evaluating committee from the N.I.M.H. The committee noted a "striking improvement" in Genie since her transfer to Butler's home. "Rather dramatic behavioral changes have ensued," its evaluation stated. "A visit to the home by two site visitors substantially confirmed the positive behavioral patterns and adjustment within that setting." The visitors reported back to Bethesda that Butler's home "would be an excellent placement" for Genie. In the contentious milieu of Los Angeles, however, the verdict was less sure.

> August 6—Dr. Rigler insisted on driving me home [from a meeting], which he did. On the way home, he said that I was not coöperating as a "trainee" and that he had never had difficulty with students before. I got very angry and told him that I certainly objected to being treated like a student, a trainee, and an idiot. I told him that it was not necessary to tell me why I was using certain methods of discipline with Genie. I explained that he had had the last eight months to handle her and had done a very poor job. I explained that the problems she presented were the product of his department and I think I could at least be respected as an experienced person.
>
> August 9—Before the regular mail delivery I found in my mailbox a metered but unpostmarked envelope containing a ten-page letter from Dr. Rigler.

The letter, copies of which had been sent to Kent, Hansen, and Omansky, was a pained recapitulation of recent history—an effort to set straight what had been scrambled in all the acrimony. "Dear Jean, I am writing to express my concerns about the current


HALF A DECADE AHEAD OF GOVERNMENT
REGULATIONS. YEARS AHEAD OF OTHER MANUFACTURERS.
HOPEFULLY, BEFORE YOU'RE IN AN ACCIDENT.

It could very well be the most dangerous of accidents.

In 1990, of the nearly 6.5 million police-reported accidents on American roads, 31% were side impacts resulting in 84,000 deaths or injuries.*

"Side impacts put occupants in a very vulnerable position," states Stefan Nilsson of Volvo's Safety Laboratory in Sweden. "In front and rear crashes, you have the protection of energy-absorbing structures. In head-on collisions, there's a driver's side air bag, but many people don't realize air bags only inflate in a narrow range of frontal collisions."

While Volvos have had reinforced steel bars in the side doors for years, Volvo's new Side Impact Protection System (SIPS) goes beyond that, changing the very way a car deals with the forces created in a side impact. The passenger cage has been redesigned to help spread out the energy of a side impact through the entire frame. Energy is dissipated. The likelihood of vehicle intrusion reduced.

"SIPS is a breakthrough for the industry," says Nilsson. "Already we are seeing significant results from SIPS in our crash testing and computer modeling."

Regulation was recently passed that says that by model year 1997 all new cars sold in the U.S. must meet new side impact standards. Today, Volvo 940, 960 and 740 series cars, with SIPS standard, already meet those more demanding requirements.

"No car can offer 100% protection," comments Nilsson, "but with things like energy-absorbing structures, air bags, and now SIPS, we are getting closer."

Drive safely.

VOLVO

*U.S. Department of Transportation, NHTSA, General Estimates System 1990.

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situation," it began, and proceeded to defend the charter of the research from Butler's charges of exploitation: "This child is not for sale, but in our view and in the view of funding agencies, knowledge obtained from study of this unique child is important knowledge to be employed for humanitarian purposes." Rigler extolled the staff of the Rehabilitation Center, which he described as "one of the best institutions of its kind to be found anywhere," but he also endorsed Butler's claims as a potential foster mother: "In this regard, I would offer my opinion that Genie is receiving excellent and loving care within your home at the present time." Nevertheless, he bemoaned what he saw as Butler's lack of coöperation, and he discouraged her hopes of increased compensation: "It is not likely that any parent or foster parent of a difficult-to-care-for child is adequately compensated for the endless and extraordinary demands placed upon them."

On the morning of August 13th, Sue Omansky and her supervisor from the D.P.S.S. arrived at Butler's house. They brought with them their department's final decision on her application to be Genie's foster parent. It had been rejected. Butler wrote in her journal:

> For about twenty minutes Genie knew something was wrong. She was very upset when I told her that she must go with Mr. Wodowski and Miss Omansky back to Rehab. She said, "No, no, no!" I told her I loved her very much but she must do what I say and go with them.
>
> Just before Mr. Wodowski took out her clothes he thanked me for all that I've done for Genie. . . .
>
> They left at about 10:30.

No sooner had Genie been taken back to the Rehabilitation Center than she was turned over to her new foster parents. Apparently, the policy concerning patients' living with hospital employees was a flexible one: the foster parents were David and Marilyn Rigler.

The sudden end of Genie's short summer on Cahuenga Boulevard marked a turning point of sorts for Jean Butler. Her defeat confirmed her in the struggle against Rigler and the other members of the Genie Team. She began a relentless campaign to avenge the wrong that she felt she and Genie had suffered, firing off letters critical of the team's research to various scientists, and muckraking through the grant proposals and symposium papers of team members for the least sign of misfeasance. Her first move was to complain to the D.P.S.S. about the apparent reversal of its position, claiming that the caseworkers had forsaken their better judgment and capitulated to pressure from the scientists to place the girl in an environment less hostile to research. The charge had no effect on Genie's placement, and David Rigler dismisses it as vitriol.

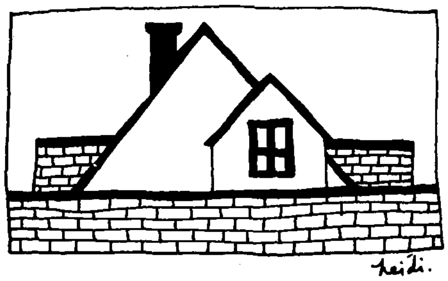
Not surprisingly, there is little coincidence between Butler's version of the summer's events and Rigler's. "She was angry at being turned down," he told me one afternoon, as he and Marilyn Rigler and I sat in his kitchen. "She began accusing us of bizarre behavior, but we found *her* behavior bizarre. She was as destructive as she knew how. She became the Wicked Witch of the West from then on, as far as we were concerned."

When I asked him about Genie's new placement, he said, "We never had any intention or plan to be Genie's foster parents. Howard Hansen had discussed the idea with me. My wife and I consulted our respective navels, and each other's navels, and retired to our individual corners to think this out. And we decided to take Genie if no one else could. We told the Social Services Department that if they absolutely couldn't get anyone, we would take her in for a limited period of time, that being—oh, how long, Marilyn?" He turned to his wife.

"Oh, a year."

"No, no. It was much shorter. I think it was three months. And then Genie arrived. I remember the date—it was Friday, August 13th. And she stayed with us for four years."

IN Horatio Algeresque fashion, Genie now arrived at the grandest of her new accommodations. David and Marilyn Rigler lived in Laughlin Park, an exclusive enclave in the Los Feliz district of Los Angeles. The neighborhood is a self-conscious exception to its surroundings—self-conscious enough so that a gate has been erected at each of its entrances. Within, the streets are hushed, their manorial houses hidden behind massive boxwood hedges and stuccoed walls. The Riglers' house, at least until Genie arrived, was an orderly sort of place. David and Marilyn had three adolescent children, a cat, and Tori, the golden-retriever puppy, whom Genie had already met. Genie was given a downstairs bedroom and a bathroom of her own. There was a large back yard where she could play, and even some neighbors she could visit: the Hansens also lived in Laughlin Park, several blocks away.



The presence of a new family member occasioned immediate adjustments. "For one thing, we prize books," Rigler told me. "Genie's room was a room in our house that had been a sort of library. Two walls were filled with books and magazines. Genie was fascinated by them, especially the *National Geographics*, and she had her favorite issues. She could also be destructive. I can't bring myself to mark passages in books. But if she liked a page she might just tear it out."

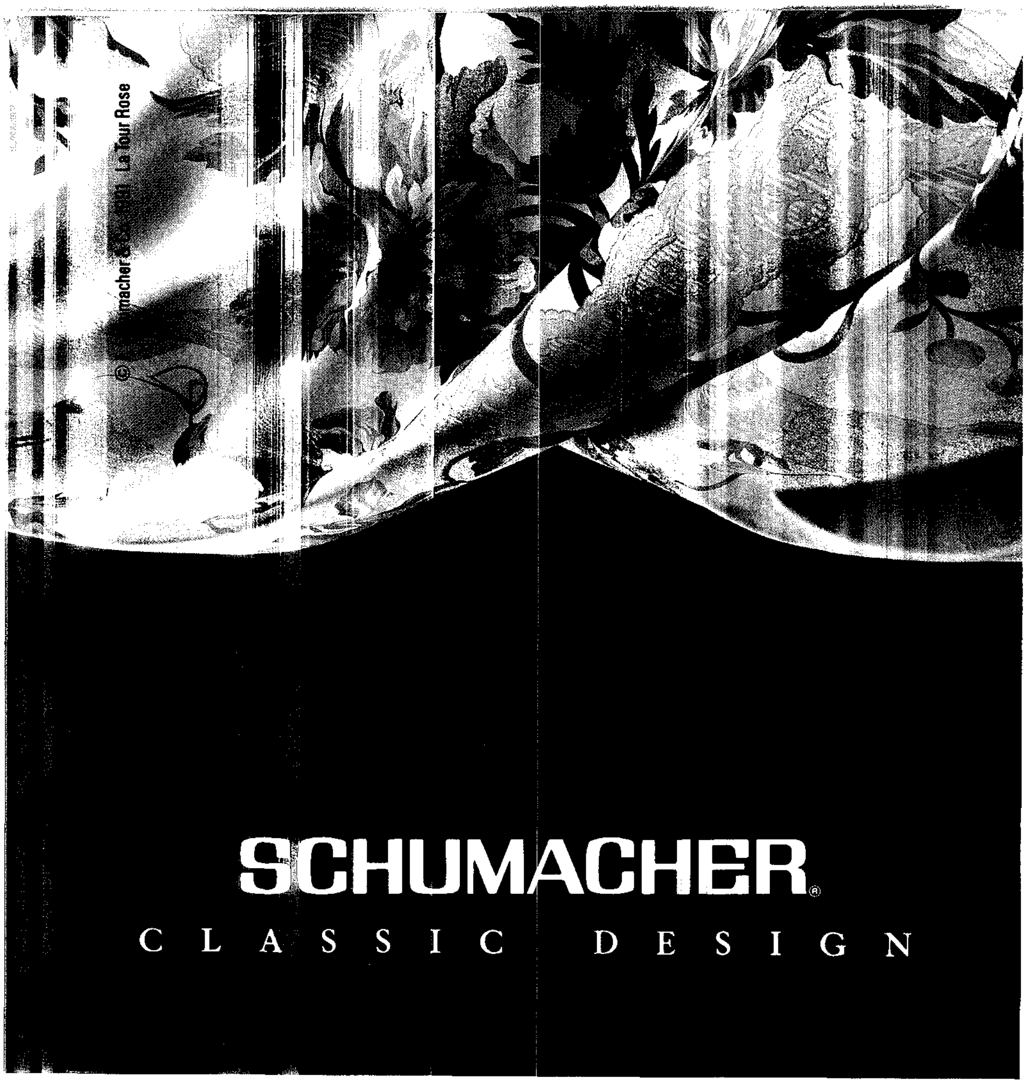
And she might just do other things as well. On her arrival at the house, Genie ran her fingers nervously around the perimeter of each room, then defecated in Rigler's daughter's wastebasket. She urinated every ten minutes, wherever she happened to be. That habit eased almost immediately, but others didn't. She hid feces in her room (she had also done this at the hospital—once, to Rigler's great amusement, spraying them with deodorant to mask the smell), appropriated possessions of the family's other children, sat at the table with her cheeks bulging, waiting for her saliva to break down the food that she had still not learned to chew. That worked passably well with the cereal and apple sauce she was accustomed to eating, but as Marilyn Rigler added tougher foods to her diet the method entailed copious spitting.

The Riglers spent the first several days trying to get Genie to accept her old nemesis, Tori. "We found that Genie and the puppy couldn't be in the house at the same time," David Rigler told me. "So we instituted a program where they could get to know each other. We had them on opposite sides of the sliding glass porch door. Then when Genie had got used to that, we opened the glass and left the screen closed, and then we opened the screen.

She eventually reached out when the dog was turned the other way, and touched its tail, and from that time on she was fine."

The success of fur-ball therapy reinforced a general optimism. Genie was at last settled in a home; she was at last free of vituperative bureaucratic wrangling. The grant from the N.I.M.H. had come through. Over the next two years, it was to provide a hundred thousand dollars through Childrens Hospital for a wide range of research efforts, including the language studies of Susan Curtiss and Victoria Fromkin. David Rigler, as the principal investigator, was released from his duties at Childrens Hospital for almost half his time, with no reduction in pay, to attend to his work with Genie. Under the grant's terms, his wife—who, advantageously, was working toward her graduate degree in human development—would be paid from five hundred to a thousand dollars a month for her ministrations. Los Angeles County would also furnish the Riglers with foster-home support, amounting to two hundred and thirty dollars a month. (Eventually, it would rise to five hundred and fifty-two dollars a month.) From now on, the research could proceed unimpeded, the only constraint on its pace provided by Genie herself.

Susan Curtiss kept up at the Riglers' her almost daily visits, recording in her notebooks as much of Genie's speech as she could catch. When, at the beginning of September, she began administering the first of a series of linguistic tests that she and Fromkin had devised, she found out quickly how exhaustingly stubborn and restless Genie could be. Even on the child's coöperative days, when she obeyed orders and participated in activities, she never initiated anything, and her participation was minimal. She was, Curtiss decided, lazy. How was one to know whether such a child was really still at the one- and two-word sentence level or was just disinclined to use sentences of greater complexity? Much later, when Genie began using sentences of several words, she would compress them into one or two syllables, so that "Monday Curtiss come" would end up sounding something like "Munkuh." This behavior earned her the nickname, among the linguists, of the Great Abbreviator. She would pronounce the uncondensed



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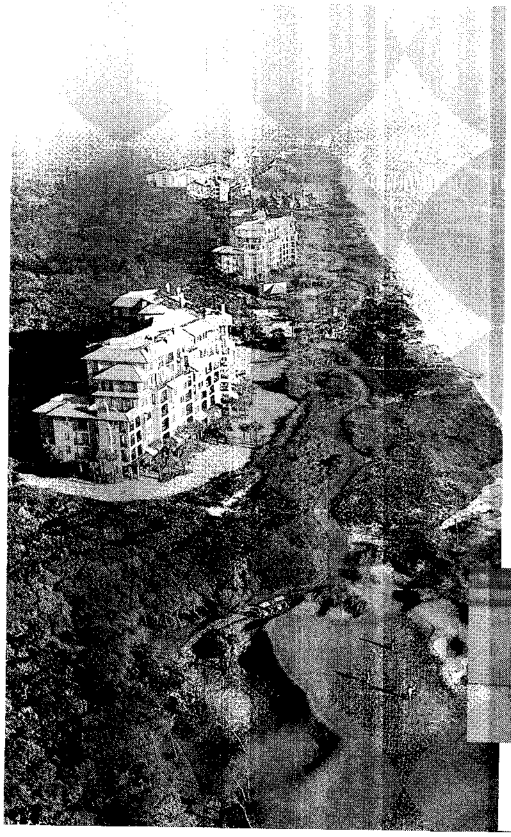

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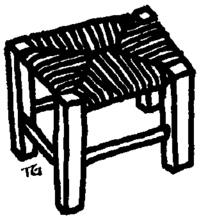
version only on firm request. Genie's capabilities, Curtiss decided, were "masked by her behavior."

Another masking behavior was so ingrained as to be metabolic. Genie was slow. Unless confronted with a dog or some other alarming apparition, she moved as though walking through water. This behavior had been observable from the beginning—ever since she shuffled into the Social Services office on the day of her discovery—but it became more evident as her comprehension of verbal commands increased. When she was asked to do something, she would often not move at all until many minutes had passed, and then would suddenly obey, as though the request had just registered. She had the same "latency of response" with language tasks. There was no sure way to know whether the child could not answer a question or had simply not answered it yet.

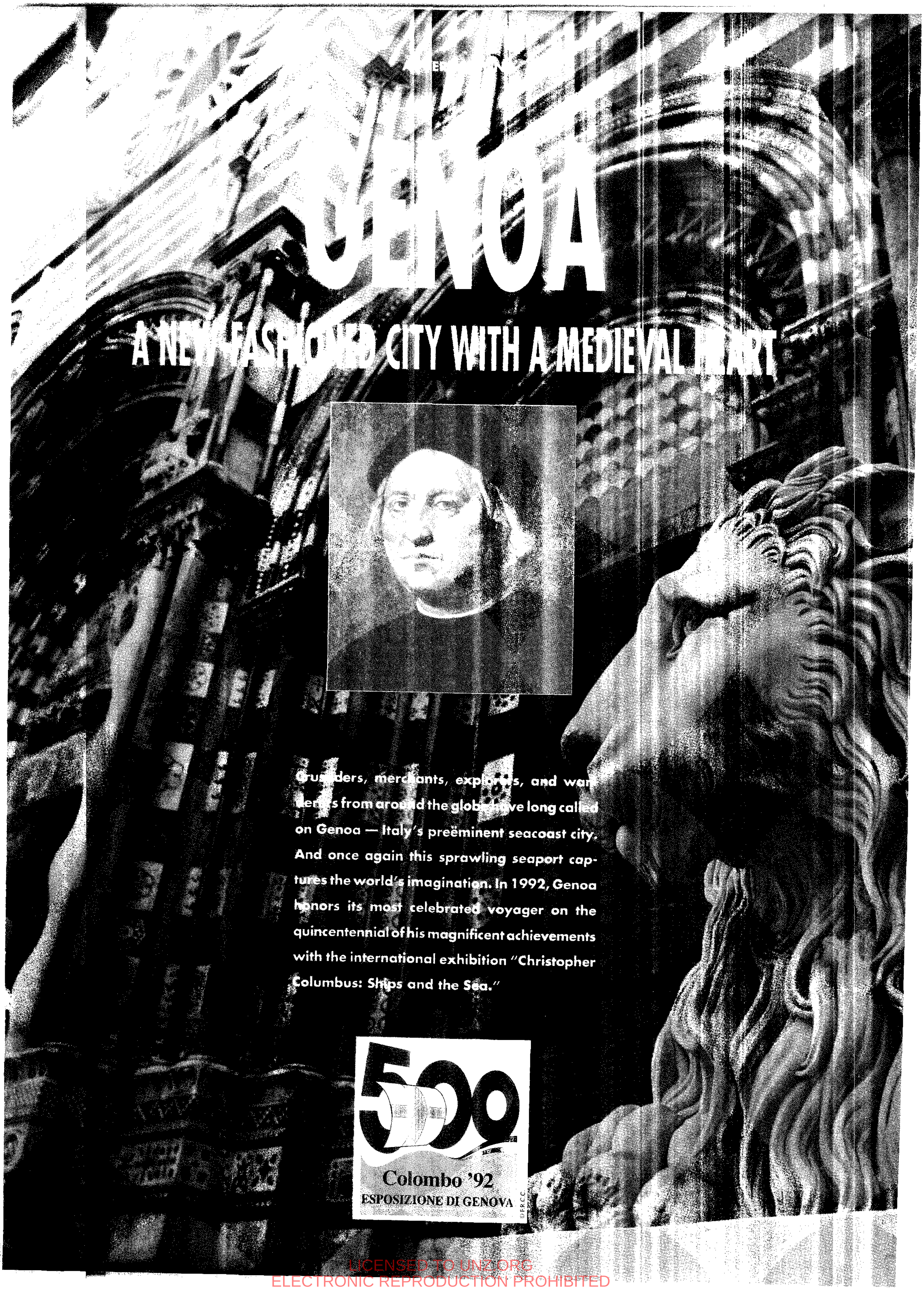


Curtiss had taken to reading stories to Genie, of which Genie remained politely oblivious. Then, on October 13th, the oblivion broke. Curtiss saw the girl's facial expressions reflecting the content of the tales. Genie had always heard; now she was listening. She was listening in general—tuning in to talk not aimed at her. In a word, she was learning to eavesdrop. As Curtiss and the Riglers became friends, Genie often seemed to be doing the observing while the scientists did the talking. Sometimes she would try to obstruct the conversations between the adults, but at other times she listened in and occasionally even interrupted with apropos comments.

Her new home was a fertile environment for such progress. In their parlor the Riglers had a Steinway concert grand. It was not often played by members of the household, but Curtiss, usually just before dinnertime, would give recitals for her audience of one. If Genie merely tolerated being read to, she was a rapt concertgoer. "Music sent her into a reverie," Curtiss told me. "She would be compelled to stand there, and may even have hallucinated. I don't know where she went. She may have been musing on the past." But Genie was transfixed only if the music was classical, and only if it was performed live. Rigler's explanation for this goes back to the years in the little room: during part of Genie's incarceration, a neighbor's child took piano lessons, and his practice sessions, filtering in through the barely opened window, were Genie's matinées. Whatever their source, Genie's tastes were adamant. If Curtiss's repertoire strayed too far into the popular, Genie would pull her hands from the keyboard and replace the sheet music with a piece she recognized as being more highbrow.

On November 10th, Curtiss was playing some nursery songs she had discovered that Genie would tolerate, and singing along. To her surprise, Genie clapped, danced, and stamped her feet to the music when Curtiss asked her to, and she sang, changing pitch in a semblance of tonal control she had never previously demonstrated. A week later, music provided the context for another innovation—not in inflection this time but in volume. During a drive to the hospital, Curtiss sang Genie an improvised song about their destination. Genie joined in, repeating "hospital" over and over, and once, in defiance of her fear of vocalizing, belting the word out. Some months later, she defied that fear again, this time letting out a scream when David Rigler tried to remove some wax from her ear. The event went straight into the notebooks. As far as the researchers know, the scream was her first and her last. But coming from a child whose explosions were almost always underground it was remarkable.

Advances in speaking came packaged with behavioral leaps. The person unofficially in charge of teaching Genie how to act was Marilyn Rigler. To show Genie how to chew, she chewed with Genie's hand held to her jaw. In four months, Genie had learned to move her own jaw in approximate fashion, and the Rigler dinner table recovered a semblance of normality, disrupted only by Genie's gesturing. Instead of asking for what she wanted, Genie would grab Marilyn's face or arm and then point or otherwise gesture to indicate her need. Her gestures were a kind of language, peculiar and peculiarly effective. To express pleasure, she would moisten two fingers in her mouth and rub them quickly against Marilyn's nose. But communication at dinnertime required conversation of a more conventional sort, and soon Genie was pressured into



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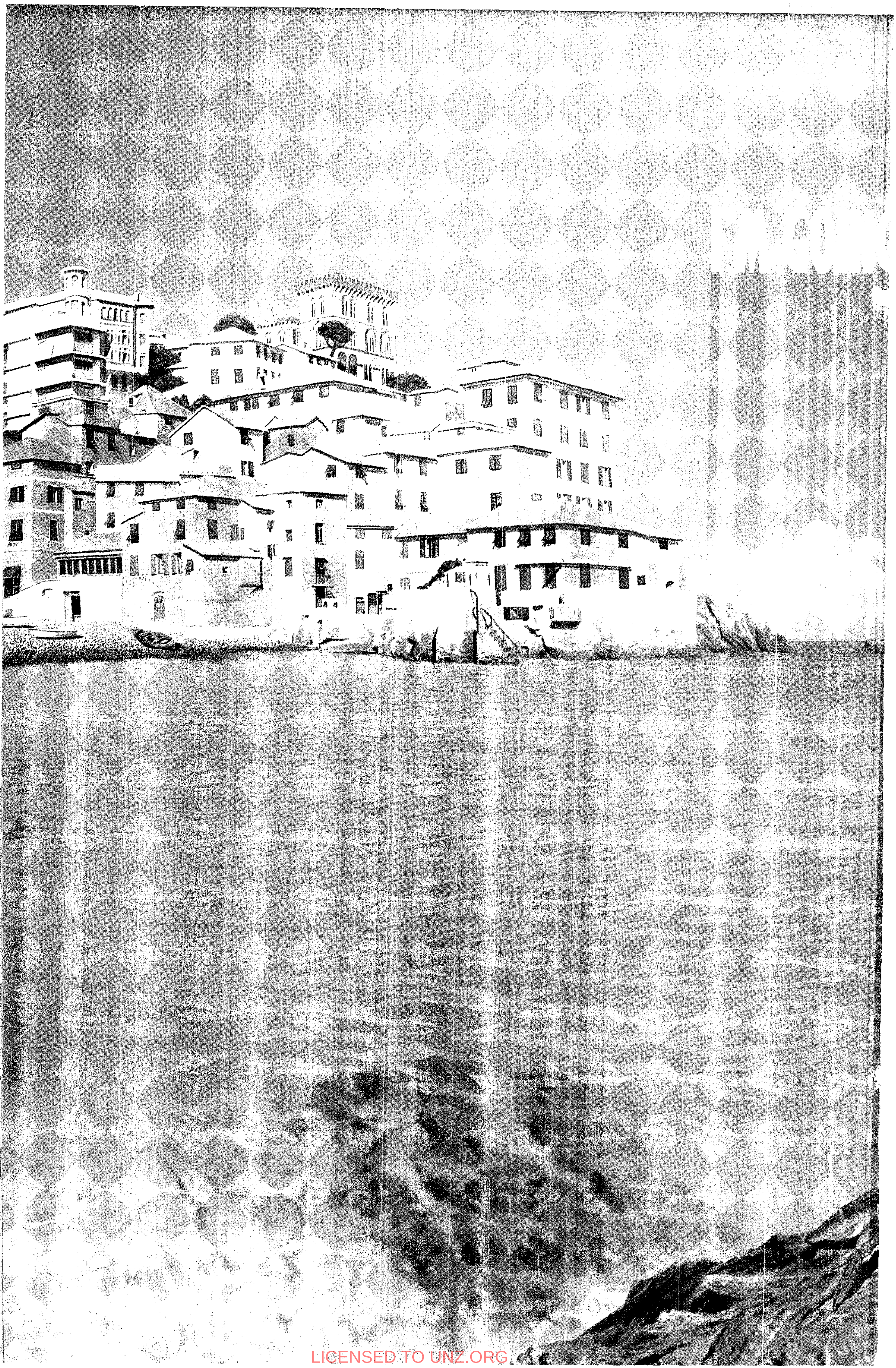

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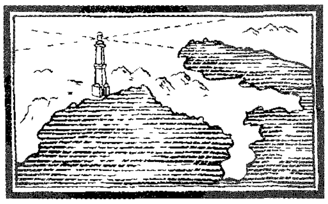
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learning to state, not manually indicate, her desires.

After Genie had had a while to adjust to life at the Riglers', she was enrolled in a nursery school, and, later, in a public school for the mentally retarded. At home, she was given speech therapy and taught some sign language—in part because it seemed to suit her predilection for manual expression. In general, though, she remained extremely taciturn. Curtiss and the Riglers saw no evidence of the chattiness or the long-string sentences that Butler had reported. Her lack of expressiveness was nowhere more dramatically demonstrated than in her tantrums, which she still conducted in a straitjacket of silent self-destruction. Marilyn Rigler painted Genie's fingernails, predicting, accurately, that vanity would discourage her from tearing at the walls and floor. Knowing how much Genie loved to be called pretty, she told her that she was not pretty when she scratched herself or ripped at her face. Marilyn found herself in the strange position, for a parent figure, of teaching a child how to have a good king-hell-buster of a fit—how to slam doors and stamp her feet. She would drag Genie out of the kitchen so that she could do her stamping outdoors.

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"He was well on his climb to the top when they declawed him."

• •

Here, too, gesture gave way to word. In Genie's iconography, a shaking hand indicated frustration, while a shaking finger signalled the imminence of a full-blown tantrum. Seeing these storm warnings, Marilyn would say to her, "You are upset, you are having a rough time." Soon she had only to say "You are upset" for Genie to assent, "Rough time." Eventually, "Rough time" became a verbal shaking finger, a spontaneous phrase by which Genie could broadcast distress. Curtiss witnessed a further breakthrough in emotional expression one morning when she arrived to find Genie crying. She had had a cough and a cold and had complained that her ear was aching, and had just learned from Marilyn the scary news that she would have to go see a doctor. "I noticed the striking change in this girl who such a short time previously did not sob or shed tears," Curtiss wrote in her dissertation. In mid-June of 1972, Curtiss recorded an event that approximately marked the first anniversary of her acquaintance with Genie. As with other accounts in Curtiss's dissertation, it is hard to tell who, subject or scientist, was being more changed by the experiment. "Today I took Genie into the city," Curtiss wrote. "We browsed through shops for about an hour. We sang and marched and carried on in our own nutty, special way as we walked. Genie seemed elated and delighted by everything I did. She commented, 'Genie happy.' So was I. Our relationship had developed into something special."

In September, the eightieth annual convention of the American Psychological Association was held in Honolulu, and several of Genie's watchers flew there to participate in a symposium chaired by David Rigler. In the Mynah Room of the Hilton Hawaiian Village, Howard Hansen delivered a paper about Genie's early life in Temple City, James Kent spoke of the eight months she had spent in the hospital, and Marilyn Rigler recounted the trials of the year just past, in an address she titled "Adventure: At Home with Genie." Then Victoria Fromkin related what she and Curtiss and Stephen Krashen, another of Fromkin's graduate students, had observed of Genie's language.

"By November of 1971, a year after she was admitted to the hospital, Genie's grammar resembled, in many respects, that of a normal eighteen- to twenty-month-old child," Fromkin said, and she delineated some ways in which that situation had changed. In the weeks before the convention, Genie had finally shown that she knew the difference between singular and plural nouns; when Curtiss said "balloons" to her, or "turtles" or "tails," Genie now responded to the final "s" and pointed to a picture of two balloons or turtles instead of a picture of one. Similarly, she knew the difference between positive and negative sentences. She understood the meaning of some prepositions, so that when Marilyn asked her where elephants are found she replied, "In zoo." She understood yes-or-no questions, and she used possessives of a sort: she could say "Curtiss chin" or "Marilyn bike." (Only after another half year did she figure out how to insert a verb, and say, "Miss Fromkin have blue car.") Her com-

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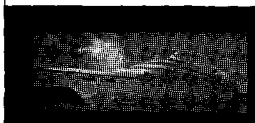

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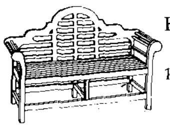

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prehension and production had progressed from one-word to two-word sentences, with an occasional three-worder thrown in. "Now, two-word utterances are very complex, when you think of what this entails," Fromkin told her Honolulu audience. "She wasn't just stringing together any two words randomly; the two words which she put together in her sentences were very strictly controlled and rule-governed. They were not random strings."

"Rule-governed" was code, a hint to the hip that Genie was in the process of pulling off a coup that would rock the linguistic world. Fromkin had a hard time toning down her excitement at the prospect. The rough draft of her speech betrays her expectations. "It is clear that Genie is acquiring the rules of English grammar," she wrote, and then amended that to read "some of the rules." On a later page, "Genie is acquiring syntactic rules" was pencilled over to read, more firmly, "has acquired." And on another page came the declaration "Genie at this stage has a grammar." All three references were deleted by the time Fromkin reached Hawaii.

The possible significance of Genie's achievement was made clear in another section deleted from the final speech: "This summary of Genie's syntactic and phonological development indicates that language acquisition can occur after the age of five and even after the onset of puberty. Genie's linguistic development thus seems to contradict the conclusions of some that language acquisition occurs during the period when cerebral dominance, or lateralization, is developing." Fromkin went on to mention the "some" by name. Genie was going to debunk Eric Lenneberg: she was going to learn syntax, even if the prevailing theory of the time said she could not.

There was a certain justice in that. Both Lenneberg and Noam Chomsky had been invited to participate in the research on Genie, and both had declined—on the ground that her case, which they saw as complicated by the emotional trauma of her incarceration, was too muddy for good science. Fromkin and Curtiss strongly disagreed with this argument. "At first, Genie's natural state was non-talking, and that state might have been a reflection of her emotional state," Curtiss told me, getting (as she tends to do on the subject) a bit emotional herself. "But as she grew socially, and acquired the ability to be happy and live life, it became clear that her problems with language were not related to any distress or emotion. I don't see how an emotional profile could allow some aspects of language to grow but not others. There are a variety of views of language acquisition. The one I can best tell you about is my own, though my view is shared by most generative linguists. That view is that emotion has little to do with it. Certainly Genie was an emotionally disturbed child, but that wasn't relevant to my concerns."

It is easy to see why Lenneberg, in particular, might have overlooked the merit of Curtiss's argument. For him, Genie presented a dismal test case: at best, she could provide a flawed endorsement of his theory; at worst, a ringing refutation. If Genie could not learn language, her failure would be attributed ambiguously—either to the truth of the critical-period hypothesis or to her emotional problems. If Genie did learn language in spite of all that had happened to her, how much stronger the rebuttal!

And, for that brief time, learning language was what she appeared to be doing. In retrospect, the September, 1972, conference in Hawaii seems the point at which the tide of optimism was taken at the flood. If François Truffaut had made "The Wild Child" about Genie instead of about Victor of Aveyron, this is where the story would have stopped and the credits begun to roll.

It must be said, in looking back, that the prospects for Genie's eventual triumph were already beclouded that summer. One piece of the orthodoxy of language acquisition is the notion that, no matter how slow or how fast children learn language, they all go through the same stages, in the same order. After children get two-word phrases, they are poised for an explosion. It is as though they had been pushing a sled up a hill, and all of a sudden they were over the edge and racing down the slope; their skills accelerate as abruptly as that. Genie had been using two-word strings even before her stay at Jean Butler's, but month after month passed and the explosion never came. She continued to plod along at a slow, sled-pushing pace.

One thing that normal children learn quickly is how to form a negative sentence. They begin by saying "No have toy," and proceed directly to the next stage, where they bury the negation within the sentence: "I not have toy." Then they figure out how to use a supporting verb and say, "I do not have a toy," and the prodigies contract the verb to "don't." Genie stayed stuck at the "No have toy" stage for almost three years, and four years after she was talking in strings she was still speaking in the abbreviated non-grammar of a telegram.

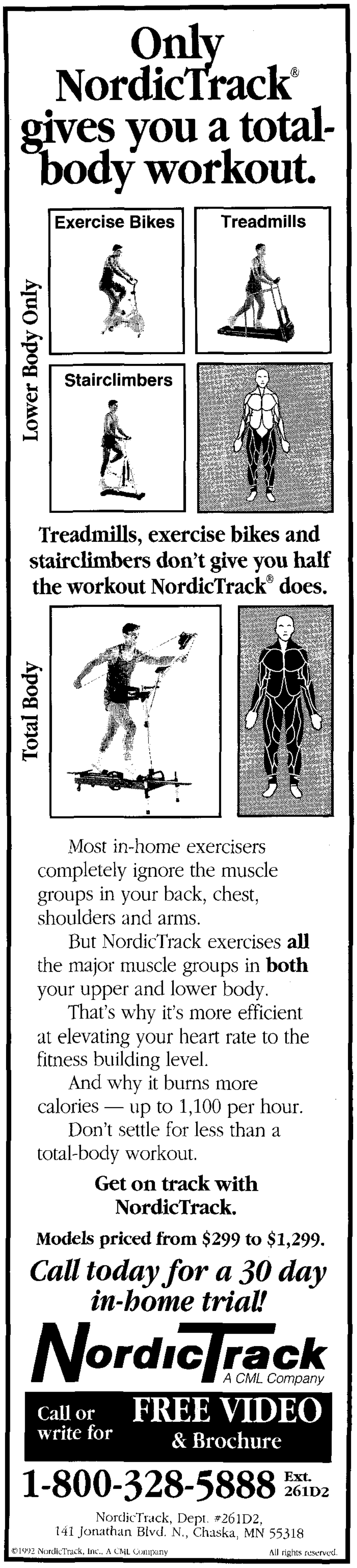
Nor could she ask a real question. Normal children are sometimes thought by their parents to be much too adept at what linguists call the WH interrogatives. But any child who says "Why?" at every turn is doing what Genie could not. Since February of 1972, she had been able to understand all questions involving "where," "when," "who," "how," "why," or "what." But when she was pushed to produce such a question herself, she mouthed monsters: "Where is may I have a penny?" or "I where is graham cracker on top shelf?" One of the obstacles to forming true questions lay close to the core of Chomskian theory. To make a WH question, one must engage in what linguists refer to as "movement"—that is, deriving the word order of the surface sentence ("When is the train coming?") from the word order of the declarative sentence underneath ("The train is coming [soon]"). Movement was a facility that Genie did not have.

She also had a problem with pronouns. Most were missing from her lexicon entirely. "I" was her favorite, and "you" and "me" were interchangeable. Here the grammar reflected Genie's egocentrism—the lack of a border between her person and her world. She never figured out who she was and who was somebody else. "Mama love you," Genie would say, pointing to herself.

"Genie was highly motivated to interact socially and to use language in that interaction," Curtiss told me. "She could be almost frantic about it. She would stare at people's mouths as they talked. She was very inventive, very sensitive to whether she was communicating or not. For instance, she would often try to describe what she had done in phys-ed class at school. It's hard to do. It's an area where tense markers are needed, and where you have to indicate who's doing what to whom. And an area where she couldn't make herself understood. She would draw pictures, mime, use homonyms—try anything to get you to understand. If you thought you did but it wasn't what she had in mind, she would try again. She was very intense about this."

That Genie's language seemed motivated by her social strivings contained a pathetic irony, because she was especially incompetent at the array of interactions known as automatic speech—the interactions essential to social discourse. She could not learn to say "Hello" in response to "Hello," could not grasp the meaning of "Thank you." She would come when she was called, but, with rare exceptions, could not summon anyone herself. She complained of a boy who was pestering her in school, but no one was ever able to teach her how to ask him to cut it out. She inhabited a prison not unlike a stroke victim's, with more to say than she was able to say, and aware of her inability. Nonverbally, however, she had no such handicap. "Without a word," Curtiss wrote in her dissertation, "she can make her desires, needs, or feelings known, even to strangers."

Faced with Genie's failure, many scientists have fallen back on the explanation—put forward by her father—that she was retarded. Curtiss disagrees. She noted to me that on some of the tests she and Fromkin administered Genie scored higher than anyone had ever scored. "On spatial tests, Genie achieved a perfect adult score," she said. "She could imagine a figure with pieces missing, and she could look at something from one perspective and know how it would look from a different perspective. She could draw silhouettes. She could categorize. Some people have said that categorizing is the key to learning language—that grammar is just organizing things into smaller and smaller categories. Genie could organize, but she couldn't learn grammar. Whatever she brought to bear on categorizing wasn't what she had to bring to bear on grammar. I would give her complex hierarchical



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models to copy, and she could do it effortlessly and flawlessly. Genie could apprehend the most complex structure. One time, we asked her to copy a structure made of a set of sticks. The sticks were different colors, but we didn't think about that—we were interested in the structure's shape. When Genie re-created the structure from memory, she got not only the shape but all the colors correct—every last stick—even though that was not part of the task. She could do all these things that are supposed to be related to grammatical structures, but she couldn't get grammar.”

Genie's specialty—her ability with the spatial and the concrete—was reflected in her talk. Most children concentrate their conversation on activities and relationships: what happened when, what So-and-So did to So-and-So. Genie concentrated instead on objects, meticulously describing and defining them by color and shape, number and size. A normal child would rarely utter among its early several-word phrases the ones that dominated Genie's speech: “big, rectangular pillow,” “very, very, very dark-green box,” “tooth hard,” “big, huge fish in the ocean.”

In the late nineteen-seventies, after Curtiss finished her dissertation, she subjected Genie to a broad range of psychological tests that measured cognitive skills other than language, and she compared the results with those from tests administered to Genie by other scientists from the beginning. “I found some interesting things,” Curtiss recalled. “I found that for every year that Genie had been out of isolation she had advanced a year in mental age. Given a chance to interact with her environment, she was growing. This is the strongest evidence that she was not mentally retarded. You never see a case of a mentally retarded child in which the mental age increases a year with every year. Also, with retarded kids the lexicon is very impoverished. They'll get a case correct but the semantics wrong. They're not sure of gender or number. Genie was always correct on cognitive matters. She knew how many and of what kind. Besides, being with Genie wasn't like being with a retarded person. It was like being with a disturbed person. She was the most disturbed person I'd ever met. But the lights *were on. There was somebody home.*”

At home with Genie in Laughlin Park, the Riglers, too, felt that they were dealing with an intelligence. “This was not a dumb kid—no way,” David Rigler told me. “She had energy and personality and incredible curiosity. She most emphatically responded to approval and was dismayed by reprimand. She craved affection and she gave it. She had a wonderful sense of humor.” Around the house, Genie handled complex tasks: she ironed, and sewed both by hand and with a sewing machine. And she drew. Her drawings seemed actually to be part of her lexicon—a compensatory, self-taught speech. When Genie was failing to transmit some idea, she would grab pencil and paper, and sketch what she could not describe. She sketched more than objects: she could depict her thoughts and desires. Curtiss remarked on her ability to convey with a few deft strokes on paper the gestalt of a situation—the juxtaposition of people or things central to one of her tales. Her perception of gestalts was uncanny. Her mind had no trouble seeing the organization behind a chaotic scene or perceiving a whole from scattered parts. It was on the gestalt tests that Genie scored higher than anyone in the literature. But her portrayal of her complex comprehension was better achieved through visual than verbal means.

Throughout her emergence, Genie grasped her everyday experiences by relating them to images in magazines and books. When fear of the Riglers' pets was her greatest concern, she clipped photographs of similar cats and dogs and collected them, as though they had the magical protective qualities of voodoo dolls. When she saw a helmeted diver at Sea World, she did not calm down until she had got Curtiss back to the house and shown her a picture of the selfsame monster in *National Geographic*. Curtiss's early conjecture was that Genie had been programmed by a childhood that was almost devoid of event or society and was dominated instead by visual experience—an experience as static as a postcard. For her, the vision frozen in *National Geographic* may have been fully as alive as the one that moved at Sea World. Later, when investigations of Genie's brain unveiled the utter dominance of her “spatial” right hemisphere over her “linguistic” left, a more mechanical cause suggested itself.

Genie's progress was withal too slow to really be called steady, but progress she made, through some idiosyncratic landmarks. She learned to fantasize verbally, and she learned to manipulate, and in March of 1974 she combined the two skills and learned to tell an outright lie. She came home from school one day with a story about how her teacher's demands had made her cry. It was a fictional event, calculated to gain sympathy from Marilyn. Her use of language to relate past events posed the question of whether she would be able to put into words events that had happened before words were part of her world. Would she have any memories from that time? And how would they be encoded? The answer—part of it—came all too horribly. “Father hit big stick. Father is angry,” Genie said one day. And on other occasions, “Father hit Genie big stick” and “Father take piece wood hit. Cry.” The scientists were learning about that part of the child's life they had not known, and learning it, moreover, from the child. “We worked with her fear of her father,” Rigler told me. “We kept assuring Genie that her father was dead and was not going to appear and punish her. We had a problem communicating to her the concept of death. She was always afraid that he would return. As she learned to talk more, a stock phrase became ‘Father hit.’ Hundreds of times. Thousands of times.”

Typically, one of her worst revelations was wordless. One day she would not come when she was called, and Rigler found her in her room sitting before a magazine, paralyzed with fright. The magazine was open to a photograph of a wolf. Genie was too terrified to explain her weird behavior, so when the Riglers had the opportunity they questioned her mother. They recall Irene's explanation—that on the rare occasions when Clark had interacted with his daughter he had imitated a dog, barking and growling at her. Sometimes, Irene said, he would stand in the hallway outside her closed bedroom door and bark.

The psychologists and psychiatrists familiar with Genie's case remain haunted by this image, and I have asked several of them, “Why a dog?” The nearest thing to an explanation

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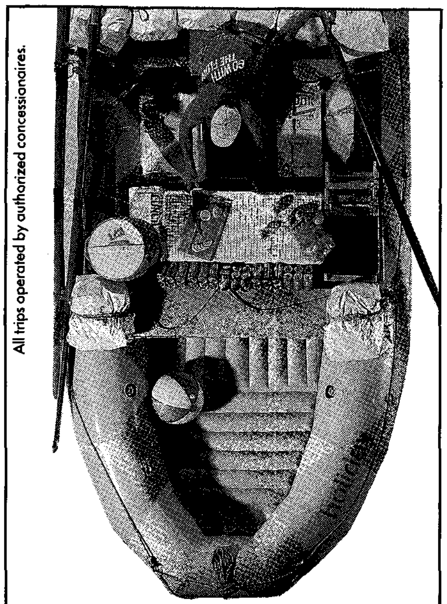

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was offered by Jay Shurley, who began by admitting his bafflement. "All I can think is that it had to do with Clark's appointing himself his daughter's guardian," he said. "Remember, he was going to protect Genie from the world, and at the same time he was punishing her with his protection. And people are often guarded by their dogs." He shrugged. "So he became a dog."

SINCE the November day in 1970 when Genie and her mother walked into the Los Angeles County welfare office, Irene had been a ghost in her daughter's life. She had never, perhaps, been much more—a blind, sad momentary presence from the world beyond the door. After the two escaped from their home, things had become better, and worse. It was not by any means merely an escape for Irene. If that had been all she was after, she could have escaped alone. But she confronted her husband and abducted her hostage daughter. If she had not had her daughter to take—had not had the obligation of setting right that blight on her life, worse even than the injustice of her own mistreatment—who knows, Irene might just have stayed at home.

Irene's belated heroism paid harsh dividends in the short term. "Heck, the first rattle out of the box there were headlines in the L.A. papers, and she was yanked into court," Jay Shurley said. "Her husband committed suicide. That was the first week. And then she lost control of the child."

Dismissed by the court, Irene returned to the house on Golden West Avenue. She spent the next five years travelling around greater Los Angeles, haunting the fringes of her daughter's celebrity. She visited Genie's various new homes and was introduced to her new extended family. Among the first people she met was James Kent, when she interrupted his initial session with Genie at Childrens Hospital. He described their introduction in his speech at the Hawaii A.P.A. symposium. "In the course of [Genie's play with a puppet], her mother and brother entered the room. She ignored her brother's greeting, moved quickly to her mother, and, pushing her face within a few inches of her mother's, peered at her without expression for a moment, then returned to the puppet play. . . . As we first observed it, Genie seemed less interested in her mother than in many of the other hospital staff. She would comply with her mother's requests to sit on her lap, but she remained stiff and aloof, and was noted at least once to have an angry outburst of scratching and spitting as soon as she could escape. Genie's mother seemed not to be aware of this notable lack of warmth; on the contrary, she remarked once after such an episode that Genie seemed to 'like me today.' "

Irene took to visiting the hospital twice a week, and as the visits went on they improved. "Genie's mother became more spontaneous and appropriate with Genie," Kent reported, "and Genie, as her relationship deepened with others, became more responsive and relaxed with her mother. Indeed, she began to look forward to the mother's visits with obvious delight."

The change was no accident. Kent credits the efforts of Vrinda Knapp, the hospital's chief psychiatric social worker, who began visiting Irene at home. Knapp's counselling of Irene was part of an attempt by the scientists to keep mother and child together. "We considered it important for Genie to have regular and frequent contact with her mother," Kent told me. "This was her only real link to her past, and we felt that it should be maintained."

The first battle the scientists had had to fight in that regard was keeping Irene out of jail. When she and Clark were indicted on child-abuse charges, Howard Hansen prevailed on a friend of his, a lawyer named John Miner, to attend the preliminary hearing on behalf of Childrens Hospital and argue in defense of Irene. Miner had recently retired as the head of the division of the Los Angeles District Attorney's office which handles child-abuse cases. Since 1964, he had also headed a Los Angeles County committee on the battered-child syndrome, which drafted the legislation that made child abuse a felony in California. Miner's involvement with Genie persisted after the disposition of Irene's case, and in April of 1972 he filed an application with the Juvenile Court to become Genie's legal guardian. An internal memo in the D.P.S.S. noted his concern. "His interest is motivated by his desire to safeguard [Genie's] part of her father's estate," it said. Miner explained to the regional D.P.S.S. bureau director that it would not be customary to become the guardian of a child's estate without also becoming the guardian of the child.

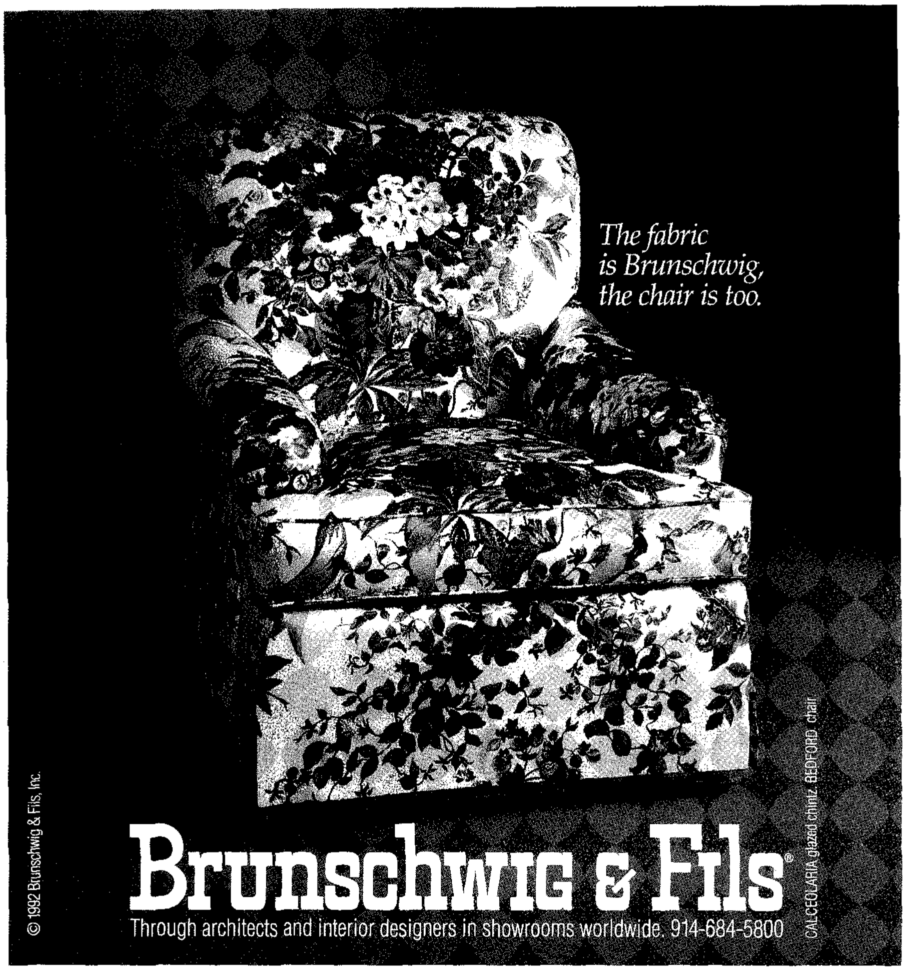
The estate left by Clark was hardly sizable. In addition to the house on Golden West Avenue, it included about twenty thousand dollars, of which a third went to Irene and a third to each of his children. The court considered two affidavits: one from Irene consenting to the guardianship and one from Genie's "attending physician," Howard Hansen. "In said doctor's opinion," another Social Services memo said, "John Miner . . . would be a suitable guardian of [Genie's] estate and person." On May 18th, the guardianship was assigned, and Miner became the person legally charged with protecting Genie's interests—insuring, for example, that she was not exploited by the researchers at Childrens Hospital.

The convenience of it all did not at first seem dangerous. Letting a patient live with a doctor, a subject with a scientist, was, of course, somewhat unorthodox, but Genie's case was an unusual one. True, the men in control of Genie all knew each other, but at least they all knew each other to be reasonable and honorable men. And, best of all, the goals of research and therapy were seemingly in concert; why, then, should the boundary between them be sharply defined?

The first blurring of that boundary may have occurred with John Miner's presence at Irene's hearing; the hospital was, in effect, participating in a criminal case involving the family of one of its patients. By the time the Genie Team made the decision to rehabilitate Irene, the line was hardly discernible. Vrinda Knapp was instructed to glean from her counselling sessions with Irene a history of the family, and to relay that information to the scientists for their use. Many of the details in Hansen's paper at the A.P.A. convention, and much of what later appeared in Curtiss's dissertation, had been revealed by Irene to her therapist.

David and Marilyn Rigler sometimes drove Genie to Temple City on weekends, and those trips, too, were opportunities for observation. The Riglers frequently filmed Genie in their own home, eating, talking, playing; they also took a camera along to Golden West Avenue and filmed her with her mother.

David Rigler once showed me some of that film. Genie is at the kitchen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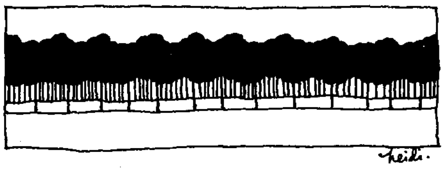
sink, beside her mother. Irene is working at the sink, her hair permed, her face a plain face, worn less with age than with worry. Genie flutters about her with a limby coquettishness, checking the counters and the refrigerator, occasionally coming to rest, like a butterfly alighting precariously, at her mother's side. In a fluty, urging voice she asks for cereal, but her mother says no, cereal isn't for lunch—they have chicken for lunch. As the camera follows, she leads Genie to the stove and lifts the lid on a large pot, so that Genie can see the chicken, and for a moment they are caught with their faces too close to the camera, frozen in grainy black and white. They are smiling. The mother's smile seems a little tight, but the child's is cheerful. When Genie walks off to a corner of the kitchen, the camera pans after her, and you can see her awkward hobble. She asks for orange juice, and for cereal again, and her high voice is all but lost in the roar through the kitchen window of the traffic on Golden West Avenue.

Irene's house had been rearranged and redecorated since the days of Genie's incarceration. "It looked very nice," Rigler told me, but other visitors found it depressing. The potty chair, at least, had been taken out back and burned. Although Irene had lived there for more than a decade before her escape, her new view of her own home was the first she had ever really had. In the summer of 1971, she had undergone an operation to remove her cataracts, and her failed eyesight was largely restored. Hansen and Knapp had arranged for her surgery; like her psychotherapy, it was provided free of charge. But anyone who expected gratitude was in for a disappointment. "Jim Kent, in particular, went to bat for doing things for Irene," Shurley told me. "I suppose Dr. Hansen did as well. Both were interested in converting her into a friend, but they didn't succeed."

It would have been a friendship across a great gap, as difficult to bridge as the chasm between Temple City and Laughlin Park. "Irene was quite looked down on, as the upper class can do toward the lower class," Shurley said. "It was a whole day's journey on public transportation for Irene to get back and forth from Childrens Hospital. She felt bad that she didn't have the right clothing—didn't have a dress to visit her daughter in the hospital. Irene commented to me about this fancy hospital that her daughter was in—how she could not have afforded it if she had had to foot the bill. Neither side had an appreciation of what life was like for the other. Irene was suspicious of the Riglers' intellectualism. And I never felt that Rigler, for his part, saw Irene as human, saw Clark as human. Rigler, Hansen, Kent—they came from environments where they had always lived well. For them, Irene was like something the cat dragged in, and that was a problem for them."

In the unacknowledged class war, the person with diplomatic immunity was Jean Butler Ruch. She and Floyd Ruch had married, and the couple had several homes and a yacht. "Nevertheless, I think Jean was more sensitive to that socio-economic stuff than Rigler was," Shurley said. "She knew how to keep her distance, respectfully, and she didn't use her wealth and position to dominate the situation. She gave Irene advice, didn't usurp, didn't invade."

As Irene's health improved and she became accustomed to her life as a widow, her affection for Jean Ruch grew, and so, apparently, did her distaste for the scientists who were studying her daughter. One day, after her eye operation, she was leaving the Rehabilitation Center with Genie and David Rigler. They were walking slowly, to accommodate Genie's characteristic shuffle, and, as Rigler recalls, "We got outside, and Irene looked at her daughter and looked at me and asked me, 'What have you done to her that she walks this way?' " Rigler was taken aback. "I don't think Genie's mother ever understood what her role in Genie's condition was," he told me, and he noted that this denial may have been a testament to the success of Irene's therapy. "I think the mother, after her counselling and rehabilitation, had a task of her own—to resolve this in her mind in a way that would allow her to live with it," he said. "Irene saw our presence as a reprimand, an indictment—as a reminder. And we were too busy congratulating ourselves on our benevolence to notice how much we were antagonizing her."



As 1972 became 1973, and 1973 turned into 1974, David Rigler must have been well pleased with Susan Curtiss's progress toward her doctorate. Except for the linguistic work pursued by her and Victoria Fromkin, precious little was coming out of the ambitious experiment of which he was the principal investigator. During her years as a resident in the Riglers' house, Genie had gone from being "the most promising case study of the twentieth century" to being, in Rigler's words, "perhaps one of the most tested children in history." She had not, however, turned into much of an oracle.

"At one point," Rigler told me, "I did a diagram of all the people from around the nation who were involved with researching and helping Genie, and it was a huge circle," and he spread his arms as wide as they would go. The researchers had produced reams of data. But the data piled up uncollated and unprocessed, the sheer volume an impediment to the drawing of any significant conclusions. A handful of papers had ensued, most of them recapitulations of Genie's horrific childhood, and none of them of much more abiding import than the paper David and Marilyn Rigler submitted to the Twentieth International Congress of Psychology, in Tokyo, in August of 1972. The paper was titled "Attenuation of Severe Phobia in a Historic Case of Extreme Psychosocial Deprivation." It detailed how, by the use of such devices as a sliding glass door, Genie had been introduced to Tori.

The N.I.M.H. found the lack of progress troubling. In a series of site visits, its grant overseers expressed their concerns to Rigler. Worried that the data were being collected in haphazard fashion, they suggested new tests to fill in gaps, and asked that others be readministered. In the fall of 1973, Rigler was given an extension and additional money for "developing an adequate research plan" and analyzing the research he had already done. A year later, with the extension running out, the N.I.M.H. deliberated on his application for a further two hundred and twenty-six thousand dollars to support the research for three more years.

Genie's progress was also being watched, from a greater remove and with a much more jaundiced eye, by Jean Butler Ruch, who gleaned reports of Genie's health and behavior from any available source. Convinced that Genie was not doing as well as advertised, she lobbied aggressively against Rigler, Hansen, and Curtiss with anyone in the scientific community who would listen.

Why did Rigler contend that Genie was acting appropriately in social situations, when she clearly was not, Ruch asked in her letter campaign. Why was Marilyn claiming credit for training Genie to set the table (by rewarding her with ten pennies each time), when Genie had already been a zealous table setter during her summer with Ruch, and before? Why, Ruch asked, did the Riglers say that Genie had arrived at their house unable to dress or clean herself, when the nurses had trained her to do all that at the Rehabilitation Center? Why were Rigler and Curtiss crowing that Genie was making three-word utterances by the end of her third year in Laughlin Park, when in the summer of 1971 she had been able to say "Foy big black car go ride" when she wanted Floyd Ruch to take her out to, for instance, the pet store, and "Bad orange fish—no eat—bad fish" in explaining why she had tossed her new pet goldfish out into the yard? Jean Ruch insisted that the Riglers had reset the chronology of Genie's progress to conceal the fact that Genie had declined in their care. "This sounds terribly self-serving," she wrote to one scientist, "but no one who saw her after her stay with us reports her ever as vibrant and active or acting and looking so 'near normal' as she was in our home."

Ruch charged that Rigler had inflated his original grant application with "imaginary consultants"—listing as collaborators eminent scientists who had done little more than poke their heads in while passing through. When I spoke to Rigler about this particular charge, he frankly admitted that he could not recall meeting one of the psychologists he had listed in the grant application as having spent two days with Genie; however, the listing of all these consultants could just as easily be ascribed to optimistic self-deception as to fraud. Ruch also accused Rigler of callous behavior toward Irene; he had, she said, insisted that Irene visit her daughter in fast-food restaurants and other such places rather than at the Rigler home, and he had refused to abet those meetings with any financial assistance, even though Irene was running through her inheritance and was sewing and selling dolls to make ends meet. "Considering that Rigler et al. went all over the USA, Hawaii, and Japan on Genie Funds, to not give a portion of their State foster-care food allotment to the mother was [viewed as] unforgivable by all who knew her financial problems," Ruch wrote. In her files she catalogued this particular item under the heading "Mother's Need vs. Rigler's Greed." The files were voluminous, running, by Ruch's count, to six thousand document pages. "She used the Freedom of Information Act to go to N.I.M.H. and get all the records of my research," Rigler told me. "And then she got furious when they notified me that she had been given the documents."

Through the error of an inexperienced clerk, Ruch was sent a seven-page paper that should not have been released to her—the grants committee's appraisal of Rigler's application for a new three-year grant. "The rule is that under the Freedom of Information Act you may buy only documents about projects which have been approved," Ruch gloated to one scientist. She characterized the committee's appraisal as "scathing."

The N.I.M.H. grants committee met to decide on its recommendations in September of 1974. A two-day site visit to Los Angeles had convinced the committee that "very little progress has been made" and that "the research goals projected probably will not be realized." Its report continued:

> The Committee feels that the proposed research plan is deficient in its own right and inappropriate for the special needs and circumstances of this unique case study. . . . The failure during the past year to implement the recommendations made by the Committee for which funds were made available . . . is disquieting. The Committee feels that this application is clearly lacking in scientific merit, and, therefore, unanimously recommends disapproval, requesting that its comments be conveyed to Dr. Rigler.

On the bright side, the committee expressed its opinion that the research had posed "no substantial risks to the individual who is the object of this proposal," and observed that "the therapeutic benefits to the subject have been and continue to be considerable." The

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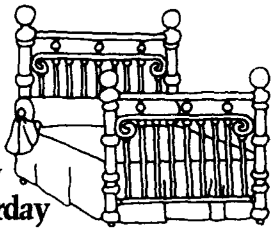
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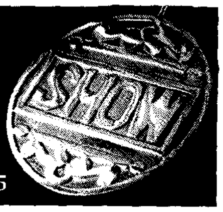
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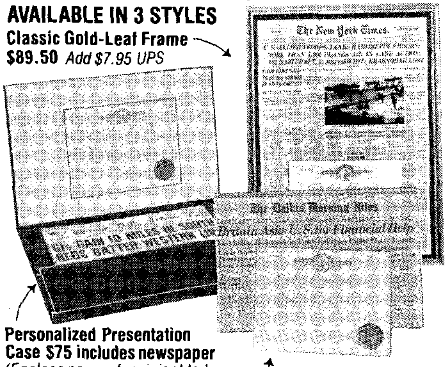

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well-being of the "subject" was nonetheless a worry:

> The Committee is concerned about Genie's future welfare and how the consequences of disapproval will directly affect Genie. The Riglers have indicated that without support for their research project, they would probably have to terminate their foster relationship with Genie and leave her future care to the State of California. The Committee appreciates that Genie is properly a ward of California, not of N.I.M.H., and feels that the appropriation of research funds for Genie's maintenance outside of a research context would not be in her best interest or that of the Federal Government.

"There were some good reasons and some bad reasons for rejecting the grant," David Rigler told me. "But, essentially, they didn't understand. The study wasn't like most scientific studies. There were no controls. It's a study of a single case, and those are rare. They're anecdotal. They can't be done in the way of normal science. The people on the N.I.M.H. staff are involved with grants. I used to work with them, and I know what that means. There was pressure on me to *be much more scientific in my approach*. Measurements, that's what they wanted. Not that I didn't want to make measurements, but I didn't want to do so in ways that would be intrusive to the well-being of the kid. I was never able to satisfy people on the committee that I was doing this in the best way for science and for the child."

On June 4, 1975, Rigler addressed a letter to an administrator at Childrens Hospital summarizing Genie's progress over the past four and a half years. She was capable of some autonomy, he said, but she still needed substantial supervision. She could care for her hygiene and even prepare simple meals. Her self-destructive tantrums were less frequent. Rigler described Genie's performance on "a very large number of standardized and custom-designed tests, many of them [administered] repetitively over time," and added that, "the tests notwithstanding, Genie remains in some sense an enigma." She was still an emotionally disturbed child, he said, but there was hope. "At age 18, Genie has not stopped her process of achievement in any sphere," Rigler wrote, noting that she had "clearly *established powerful emotional ties* to both the foster mother and to her biological mother." He concluded by saying, "As you know, we are contemplating relinquishing Genie's foster care; however, we have a continuing wish to be of service to her in a new placement."

Before the month was out, Genie's bags were packed. She went home to Irene—to the house on Golden West Avenue in Temple City, where she had spent the bulk of a painful childhood and almost every weekend of the previous six months.

"After we gave her up, we were worried how the mother would take care of her," Rigler told me. "We have *some money. We can afford babysitters* and help. Irene was impoverished. So that first summer we made arrangements for Genie to go to summer school and, when that was over, to day camp. But the mother asked her 'Do you want to go to day camp?' and Genie said no. So she didn't go. She stayed home, and before long the mother was calling for help. Not to us, but to the protective services."

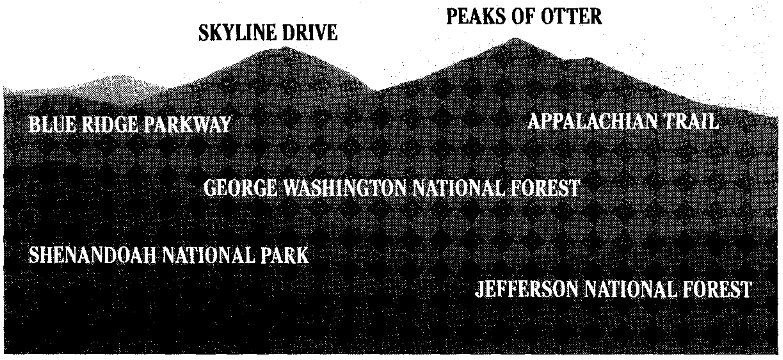
So Genie was moved again, in the fall of 1975, entering the first of five new foster homes. Now she was beyond the direct care of both her mother and the scientists; John Miner's legal guardianship, too, had ended, on the day she turned eighteen.

That she was in crisis was evident from her behavior. She seemed to be intentionally regressing. She closed up, depriving the world of whatever she thought it wanted. A barometer of her happiness had always been her bathroom habits. Her lifelong bowel problems had waned at Jean Butler's house and returned when she moved to the Riglers', only to improve again as she settled in. Now they resumed, forcefully, and the consequence showed just how full circle her life had come. During her childhood, a chronic constipation had been Genie's physical protest. At one point, Clark had tried to remedy his daughter's obstinacy by forcing her to down an entire bottle of castor oil. The overdose had landed her in a physician's office. That battle, as it turns out, was premonitory.

According to Rigler, "the lady running one of the foster homes was rather bizarre." He recalled visiting the home "from time to time," and counselling Genie in her regular outpatient visits to Childrens Hospital. "The woman was very rigid, and Genie had a powerfully strong will," he said. "Ultimately, the collision occurred over the issue of her toilet behavior. What happened in this home was that she became constipated, and this got to the point where it was very painful. The woman tried to extract fecal material with an ice-cream stick. There was no injury. But she was traumatized."

Genie's reaction to the trauma, as the scientists interpreted it, was to up the ante. If the world would go to that extreme to invade her sovereignty over her body, she would deprive it of something else—something it had desired from her and rewarded her for. For five months, she didn't speak. "Genie wanted to have some control over her life, and she never did," Curtiss told me. "She never had any control whatsoever over what happened to her. The only way for her to control her life was to withhold feces or withhold speech, and so she did. It wasn't an attempt to quit communicating that made her quit speaking. She had had this terrible—a couple of terrible experiences. She had a fear of vomiting, and she had vomited a couple of times and been punished for it. And then—oh, this story is so terrible I can't tell you all of it—she was in one of her foster homes, and it was an abusive home, and they told her that if she vomited once more she would not ever get to see her mother again. She didn't know what she had done wrong, but she was afraid that if she opened her mouth she would vomit. But even during her elective mutism she wanted to communicate with certain people, and one of them was me, and, thank God, she'd been taught some sign language. She signed furiously to me, about how much she loved her mother and missed her—about everything. You could see her wanting to eat, but she would refuse to open her mouth. It was very labored eating. She would—" Curtiss twisted her face sidewise and looked up, like a fish eying a morsel of food on the surface of the water. "And then she would open quickly and gulp it. After not eating, and living with that abusive foster family, she ended up in the hospital."

Curtiss's notes from Genie's tenure in foster homes display the girl's longing. "I want live back Marilyn house," Genie said in November of 1975. In August of 1977, it was "Think about Mama love Genie." These notes were intended as records not of Genie's emotions but of her language ability, for Curtiss's pursuit of Genie was still in the name of linguistics. In 1977, she



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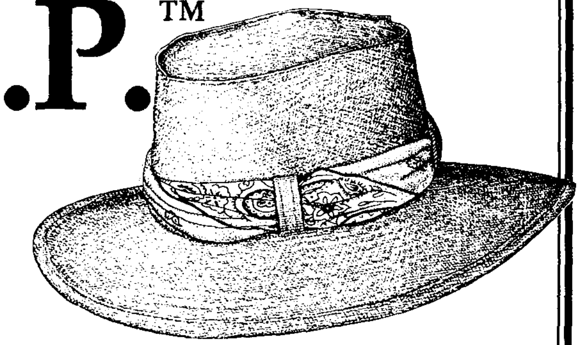

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and Fromkin received a grant from the National Science Foundation, so they were able to continue their work irrespective of Rigler's fortunes with the N.I.M.H. They were now the only scientists funded to work with Genie. "None of the other research had panned out," Curtiss says.

FOR Curtiss, it was panning out on two fronts. She continued her testing of Genie, and at the same time she was compiling her doctoral thesis—summing up the Rigler years, sorting out all the things that Genie had learned to do from all that she had not. "She had very quickly developed a vocabulary, and put her vocabulary in strings to express complex ideas," Curtiss told me. "She was a very communicative person. But, despite trying, she never mastered the rules of grammar, never could use the little pieces—the word endings, for instance. She had a clear semantic ability but could not learn syntax. There was a tremendous unevenness, or scatter, in what she was able to do."

That scatter had been one of the initial curiosities of Genie's case; now the years of research had seasoned it into significance. "One of the interesting findings is that Genie's linguistic system did not develop all of a piece," Curtiss told me. "So grammar could be seen as distinct from the non-grammatical aspects of language, and also from other mental faculties. The hallmark of cognitive development in normal children is its multiplicity. Everything is going on at once. It's difficult to tell by observing the average child that acquiring language is a cognitive task separate from others, and full of discrete pieces. But we saw with Genie that these things could sprout independently, by means of different mechanisms."

When Curtiss says "mechanisms," she is not being abstract or metaphorical. She means not only psychological but physical mechanisms—structures in the brain. As Curtiss chased her quarry deeper into her dissertation, she chased it more and more in Eric Lenneberg's direction; her last chapter was on neurolinguistics, and delved into the biological basis of Genie's language skills. Genie's inabilities bore out Lenneberg's theory, at least conditionally. She demonstrated that after puberty one could not learn language simply by being exposed to it. Her scatter was especially confirming. It divided the "learned" skills, such as vocabulary, from those said to be innate, such as syntax. Furthermore, the syntactic abilities, which both Chomsky and Lenneberg had predicted would be biologically determined, had indeed been constrained by Genie's biology—thwarted by her development.

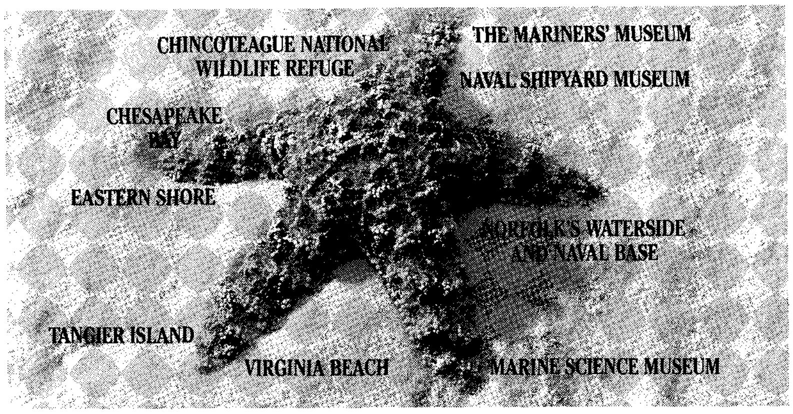
It was a mischievous revelation. Though it appeared to affirm Chomsky, it could also be read as refuting him. If some parts of language were innate and others were provided by the environment, why would Genie's childhood hell have deprived her of only the innate parts? How could a child who lacked language because she had been shut away from her mother be proof of the contention that our mothers don't teach us language? Why should she be unable to gain precisely the syntax that Chomsky said she was born with? The problem was not peculiar to Genie's case. It was constitutional, an aspect of Chomskian thought that seemed, on the surface, paradoxical: if syntax is "innate," why must it be "acquired" at all?

The answer might lie in Genie's brain; perhaps she was not grasping grammar because she was using the wrong equipment. As early as the fall of 1971, Curtiss, Fromkin, and Stephen Krashen had begun doing neurolinguistic tests in the hope of finding out exactly what part of Genie's brain they had been talking to all those months, what part of Genie's brain had been talking back. The equipment search would have alarmed those early linguists who thought that seeking a biological center for something as ineffable as language was as futile a misadventure as looking for a center of the soul. Nevertheless, modern neurology has found concrete mechanisms for other incorporeal things—or, at least, found where those mechanisms reside. The ability to watch a baseball's flight and know where it will land inhabits the brain's right parietal lobe, above and behind the ear. Getting a joke, understanding a metaphor, and realizing that something is inappropriate to say in a conversation are also talents of the right hemisphere. The right brain listens to music. Both hemispheres know the meanings of words. Mathematics, logic, and language—at least, the grammatical part of it—have a preference for the left hemisphere.

From the misfortunes of brain-damaged people, it is clear that language tasks are dispersed within their left-hemispheric home. Someone whose brain is injured above the left ear in a region called Wernicke's area may still be able to speak correctly, even glibly, but often there will be no discernible idea behind the voluble word strings. If the injury is forward of that, in Broca's area, the victim will struggle painfully toward expressing his thought, unable to form sentences. From the earliest observations of Genie, it appeared that her brain function was biased: the tasks she performed well were all right-brain tasks; the tasks she failed were all left-brain. Genie's response to tasks requiring an equal collaboration between hemispheres was frustrated and hesitant, with none of the quick confidence she displayed when thinking "right."

The dominance of one hemisphere or one lobe in any given task is never total. Both sides of the brain work on every task, but their collaborations are lopsided. How the tasks are divided depends on the individual. In the fine points of brain layout, we are each different from our neighbors. Genie's deviation, however, was extreme, and Curtiss wanted to know why.

Her opportunity was provided by another aspect of brain physiology. Each side of the brain controls the opposite side of the body. Unfortunately for neurolinguists, you cannot whisper to the left brain through the right ear without the right brain's overhearing you, because each ear is wired to both sides of the brain. The connection to the opposite side is stronger, however, and in one circumstance it has a near monopoly: when a sound is presented to the left ear at the same time that a different and competing sound is presented to the right ear, each ear reports almost exclusively to the opposite side of the brain. This oddity makes possible what is called the dichotic listening test. By playing different things simultaneously into each of Genie's ears, Curtiss was able to speak directly to each hemisphere of



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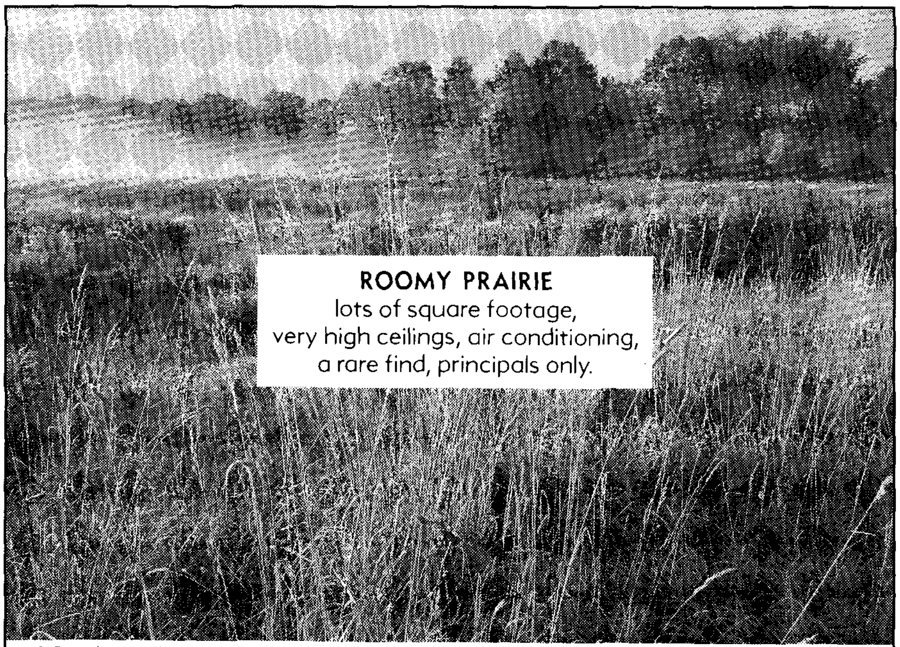

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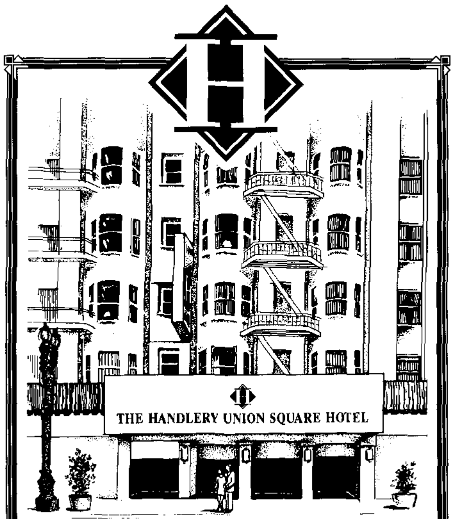
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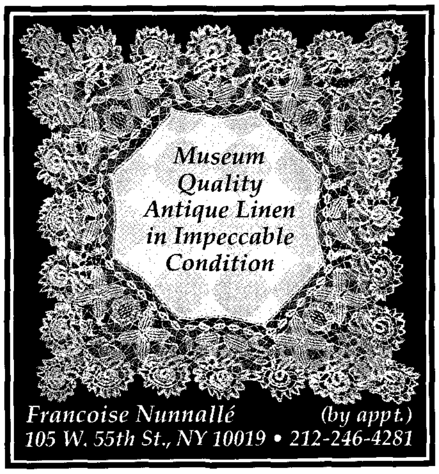

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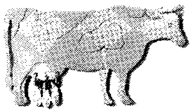
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her brain, and measure each hemisphere's response.

"What matters is the material the ear hears," Curtiss told me. "Language is handled better by the right ear, and environmental or musical sounds by the left ear. We played environmental sounds to Genie and checked her response. Each ear alone performed perfectly; both ears with the same sounds were O.K.; but when the two ears competed the left ear performed better. That's normal—but the degree of the asymmetry was not. Then we fed her words the same way." The results bore out long-standing suspicions. Genie's brain was processing language just as it did environmental sounds—on the right. The right brain was handling work usually done across the aisle. The real surprise lay in the degree of the imbalance. Normally, the dominance of one side over the other shows up in the dichotic listening test only as a subtle preference—nothing too pronounced. With Genie, it was pronounced.

Seeking to provide herself with a second opinion, Curtiss took Genie to the Brain Research Institute, on the U.C.L.A. campus. "We attached electrodes to her skull to read her brain waves as we showed her pictures or read her sentences," Curtiss told me. "First, we showed her faces. Her response pattern was parallel to the environmental-sounds test—that is, the right hemisphere showed a greater response than the left. Normal. Then we played sentences." The results, as before, were radical. Genie's performance was as lopsided as that of children whose left hemispheres have been surgically removed. She didn't seem to be using her left brain for language at all. When it came to its central function, her left brain appeared to be *functionally* dead.

"Why should this be so?" Curtiss asked, in a paper on language and cognition published in *Working Papers in Cognitive Linguistics* in 1981. She continued, "Genie's case suggests the possibility that normal cerebral organization may depend on language development occurring at the appropriate time." To the question "Why must we acquire what's innate?" Genie was suggesting an answer. Eric Lenneberg had claimed that the brain organized language learning. Now it seemed likely that some stimulus was needed to organize the brain. Curtiss had run her finger down the string of Genie's experience until she encountered the fabled, elusive knot—the tie between language and humanity. If Genie was any indication, we are physically formed by the influence of language. An essential part of our personal physical development is conferred on us by others, and comes in at the ear. The organization of our brain is as genetically ordained and as automatic as breathing, but, like breathing, it is initiated by the slap of a midwife, and the midwife is grammar.

A slap is all that's needed. "It seems to take a phenomenally small amount of input to trigger this special process," Helen Neville told me. Neville is a neuroscientist with the Salk Institute, in La Jolla. In Curtiss's 1981 paper, she cites experiments by Neville to corroborate her observations of Genie. In 1977 and 1978, Neville carried out experiments on deaf children who used American Sign Language. Such children have provided the armamentarium of modern linguistics with one of its most potent weapons. Their usefulness lies in their history. Even today, deafness in children is often misdiagnosed as retardation, and the children languish in misdirected programs. The best-intentioned families may feel that their deaf children would be better off learning to read the speaking world's lips rather than the hand signs of an insular culture. Thus, the deaf may have contact with A.S.L., their first bona-fide language, at two or at five or at fifteen years of age. Their plight has provided linguistics with a thousand Genies, and, far better, with Genies who have not been psychologically abused but only linguistically deprived. Neville found that the deaf who learned A.S.L. during childhood had left brains lateralized for language as well as for other tasks, but those who were deprived of sign language in their early years did not. Their brains were unformed. The midwife had not spanked the baby. "Relating Neville's data to Genie's case suggests that language development may be the crucial factor in hemispheric specialization," Curtiss wrote. "When [language] develops, it determines what else the language hemisphere will be specialized for. In its absence, it prevents the language hemisphere from specializing for any higher cortical functions." The insight promised to redefine some basic intertwined ideas: What does it mean to say that something is a language? Language is a logic system so organically tuned to the mechanism of the human brain that it actually triggers the brain's growth. What are human beings? Beings whose brain development is responsive to and dependent on the receipt at the proper time of even a small sample of language.

In the light of all this, then, what was Genie?

CURTISS's best attempt to grapple with this question remains her doctoral thesis. It is the most significant published result of all the research on Genie—significant enough to be cited in virtually every current American textbook on basic linguistics, sociology, or psychology. In addition (something rare for a scientific thesis), it was picked up for publication as a book. "Genie: A Psycholinguistic Study of a Modern-Day 'Wild Child' " was published by Academic Press, in mid-1977. Besides sporting hard covers, it differed from the dissertation in having a dedication page, which read "To Genie," and a frontispiece, which was a pencil drawing of a smiling person with curly hair and big ears holding a small figure in its left arm. Curtiss's caption for this drawing read, in part:

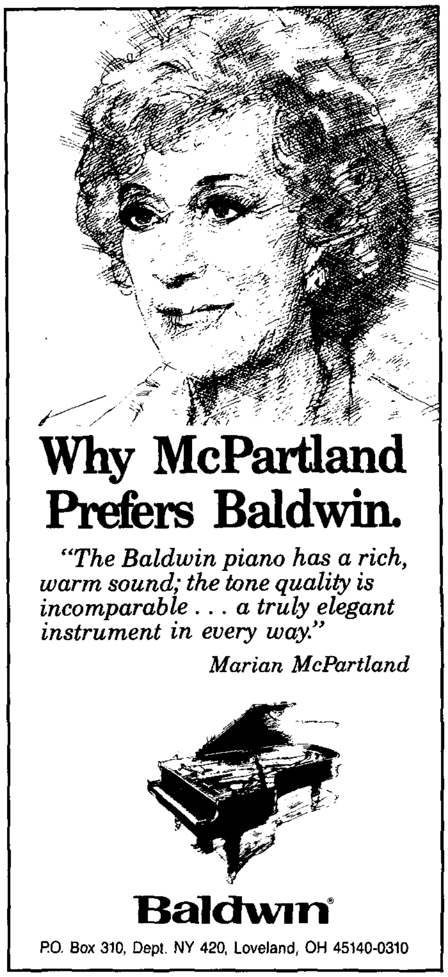
> Early in 1977, filled with loneliness and longing, Genie drew this picture. At first she drew only the picture of her mother and then labeled it "I miss Mama." She then suddenly began to draw more. The moment she finished she took my hand, placed it next to what she had just drawn, motioning me to write, and said "Baby Genie." Then she pointed under her drawing and said, "Mama hand." I dictated all the letters. Satisfied, she sat back and stared at the picture. There she was, a baby in her mother's arms. She had created her own reality.

Irene's response to Curtiss's dissertation was apparently instantaneous. She disliked it even before she had opened it. "When I saw the title of the book, I felt hurt," she wrote. "My daughter . . . classified as a 'wild child.' " Her rebuttal was handwritten on lined loose-leaf paper and was addressed "To Sam"—R. Samuel Paz, a lawyer in Alhambra. It became Exhibit B in the long season that was about to ensue. Exhibit A was the dissertation itself.

Irene was especially incensed at Curtiss's opening chapter, which recounted Irene's life with Clark and the dreadful tribulations of their children. Irene's letter (in it, she calls her daughter by her real name, which I have replaced) quibbled with much of that description. She wrote:

> I was not frequently beaten. 2 times in the last year.
>
> He did try 1 time to kill me. . . .
>
> Genie was never forgotten and I did the best I could in taking care of her. . . .
>
> It depended on the weather to what she wore while sitting on the potty chair. She was able to move her arms, legs, bend forward and to the sides.
>
> [Curtiss] writes as though Genie stayed all the time on the potty chair.
>
> Genie was never forgotten.
>
> Genie was able to move her arms when she had her sleeping bag on. It was not a straitjacket. It was an oversize infant's crib with wire screen around sides. There was a wire screen top but I never used it. . . .
>
> Genie did hear speech.
>
> Our home is very small. . . .
>
> She could hear the traffic noise from street.
>
> She heard the neighbors next door coming and going. . . .
>
> She heard airplanes, birds, neighbors, traffic noises.
>
> Genie was not forgotten.
>
> Her father did not beat her.
>
> The paddle was not left in Genie's room.
>
> Her father did talk to her.
>
> Once in a while he did bark at her to distract her making noise without opening door.
>
> He never barked at her face to face.
>
> He talked to her.
>
> He did not scratch her. . . . He did not beat Genie.
>
> He did not stand outside of her room and bark and growl at her. . . .
>
> There was a chest of drawers, a chair, a folding bed, 2 large trunks, window shades, and curtains. Oversize baby bed. Potty chair.

Irene's official complaint was not about inaccuracies. It was, rather, the opposite—that depictions as detailed as those related by Curtiss, and by other scientists in various papers and speeches, could only have been pilfered from Irene's own privileged conversations with her therapist, Vrinda Knapp, and with Knapp's supervisor, Howard Hansen. In October, 1979, Irene filed suit in Superior Court against Hansen, Knapp, David Rigler, James Kent, Susan Curtiss, and Childrens Hospital, accusing them of multiple infractions of patient-therapist and patient-physician confidentiality. The defendants had, the suit claimed, "exposed, revealed, and published to the public . . . personal, confidential, and intimate details of the years of imprisonment, suffering, isolation, abuse, and torture" suffered by Irene and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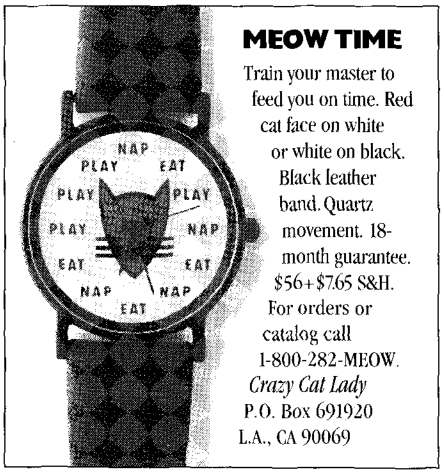
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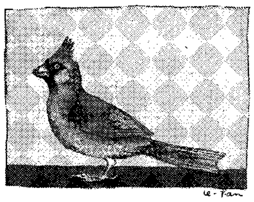
Genie. That wasn't all, or even the worst. The fourth of five causes of action in the suit accused the scientists of subjecting Genie to "extreme, unreasonable, and outrageous intensive testing, experimentation, and observation" under "conditions of duress and servitude"—in short, of performing unethical human experimentation. The remaining cause of action faulted John Miner, Genie's guardian from 1972 to 1975, for not protecting her from harm. Irene asked for both compensatory and punitive damages.



"The suit was right out of the blue," Rigler says. "One Sunday morning, we got a call from a friend who said, 'Did you know your name is in the paper?' So we got the L.A. *Times*, and that's how we learned we were being sued. And it had Genie's real name, and we'd been so careful all those years to keep that away from the public."

The debacle had been brewing. In 1975, when Miner lost guardianship, Irene took receipt of the guardianship papers chronicling Genie's career, and a full awareness dawned on her of just what her daughter had been living through. And in 1978 she had had to defend Genie's estate against a claim filed by Miner and David Rigler; Rigler was requesting compensation for therapy given to Genie in the first six months of 1975, after the N.I.M.H. grant had run out and before Genie had left the Rigler home. Irene's lawyers objected that Rigler had no documentation of the therapy sessions and only an inexact memory of them, and that he had not presented Miner with an itemized bill. The judge agreed that Rigler had benefitted from "substantial sums" paid out by the N.I.M.H., and from the foster-home subsidy from the county, but he praised the Riglers' role in Genie's rehabilitation. Noting that the forty-five-hundred-dollar claim would "virtually exhaust the estate," he awarded the petitioners thirty-one hundred dollars, including six hundred dollars to cover legal fees.

Nevertheless, the biggest provocation for Irene remained Curtiss's book, according to Samuel Paz, who along with another attorney, Louise Monaco, represented Irene in her suit against the scientists. Paz was well prepared for the issues in the case, scientific as well as legal. As an undergraduate at U.C.L.A., he had majored in psychology and had trod some of the same intellectual hallways as Victoria Fromkin and Susan Curtiss. "At one point, I went through Curtiss's book and tallied up the experimenting that was done," he told me. "The intensity and frequency of sessions was high. There were other research papers, too, and if you look through them you will get a good idea of what Genie had to endure. She was on a testing regimen, at one point, of sixty or seventy hours a week. The response when we asked the researchers about this was that it was fun—that Genie thought of most of this as a game." The case provided plenty of other fuel for outrage. In one early deposition, Howard Hansen stated that the records of Irene's psychotherapy, which contained information so sensitive that they were not allowed out of the psychiatric ward, were lost entirely, gone without a trace.

However amply inspired, the suit was remarkably adventurous, coming from a woman who was described even by her lawyers as a timid individual. David Rigler remembers the moment when the mystery was made clear to him, the hidden hand revealed. "When I gave my deposition, Irene's lawyer had a copy of Curtiss's dissertation marked up, with passages underlined that were supposedly slanderous of Irene," he told me. "I asked if I could see the book, and he handed it to me, and the front cover fell open, and the name written inside was Jean Butler Ruch."

In the eight years that Jean Ruch had been Rigler's antagonist within the scientific community, he had had no suspicion of her growing association with Irene. By Ruch's account, that association had suffered a hiatus of four years, after Irene called her one afternoon to cancel a meeting, saying that Rigler had forbidden her to see Ruch under penalty of losing visitation rights with her daughter. When the guardianship was no longer controlled by John Miner, the mother and the schoolteacher were emboldened to find in their common antipathies the grounds for an alliance.

"Ruch stayed in the shadows, but she was constantly chiding Irene—putting a bug in her ear that the scientists were overreaching," Paz told me. "Her involvement seemed to be the catalyst. My own assessment is that Irene was very passive, that she would never have done this on her own. When she called me, I felt that I wasn't really talking with her but with Mrs. Ruch. She wouldn't sound like herself, she would be very assertive. 'I want to do this!' or 'I know what's going on!' I didn't get the feeling that I was dealing only with Irene."

In length as well as rancor, the court case proved epic: the process of discovery, deposition, hearing, and judgment stretched out over five years. The longer it dragged on, the stronger grew the suspicion on the part of Irene's lawyers that they were contesting marshy ground. The same endless recitation of test procedures and test results which had given rise to the charges of human experimentation made a mockery of the notion that Curtiss had intended her dissertation as a potboiler—had exploited Genie's sad past for the sake of profit. Early in the proceedings, Curtiss had offered a compromise. Paz and Monaco recommended to Irene that she accept it. "We got to the point of settling the case in what I thought were the just interests of Genie," Paz said. "Curtiss had proposed putting into Genie's trust fund money that came from profits on her dissertation or any other scientific work based on Genie. But Irene was prodded by Jean Ruch to decline that offer. Ruch thought that it was unsatisfactory—that Irene should receive a lot of money. But the privacy issues related to Irene just weren't that strong. She had become a public figure."

Faced with Irene's intransigence, Paz and Monaco withdrew from the case. It was to be decided in chambers, and Irene went before the judge representing herself. It was now 1984, and the principal characters were subtly (or not so subtly) changed from those who had been there at the start. Floyd Ruch had died, leaving Jean a widow. Susan Curtiss, now Dr. Curtiss, had married and had given birth to her first child. Paz had become the president of the Los Angeles A.C.L.U. Owing to "economic exigencies," Childrens Hospital had undergone something of a reorganization: James Kent had moved to Children's Institute International, a child-abuse treatment center, and David Rigler, whose position had been eliminated, had opened a small private practice in Northern California.

The complaint was essentially dismissed—or, rather, upheld, in a Tom Sawyerish bit of jurisprudence. The things that Curtiss had wanted to do with Genie she was now instructed to do by the Court. She agreed to direct a program for Genie of linguistic, neurolinguistic, and neuropsychological evaluation and language instruction. Childrens Hospital was enjoined to give Genie yearly physical and psychiatric evaluations. To fulfill such obligations, Curtiss and the other defendants had full access to and use of Genie's records, and were granted the use of Genie's family history in scientific publications and speeches as long as they observed certain modest proprieties and donated any income to Genie's trust fund. As a first step in that direction, Curtiss relinquished $8,383.79, her royalties to date. No other financial penalties were imposed.

Irene's anger overrode the settlement's condition that she not deprive the scientists of access to her daughter. She hid Genie away. Genie currently lives in a home for retarded adults, and visits her mother on one weekend each month. With the exception of Jay Shurley, none of the scientists have seen her. They do not know where she is, nor, except for rumors, have they heard how she is doing. In 1987, Irene sold the house on Golden West Avenue. She left—for the scientists, at least—no forwarding address.

NOT long ago, I paid a visit to David and Marilyn Rigler in their new home, a pretty, two-story frame house on the Northern California coast. The house was smaller than their previous one, but it didn't need to accommodate the life they had led in Laughlin Park: the children were grown, the Steinway was sold, and Tori's ashes were spread beyond a windbreak of eucalyptus in a field across the road. Genie remained only in a voluminous collection of reports, films, drawings, and photographs squirrelled away in the back of the Riglers' garage.

When I asked David Rigler about the claim he had brought against Genie's estate in 1978, he looked uncomfortable and forlorn.

"I didn't do that for the money," he said. "I never had funds in mind when I took Genie in." His memory of the

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claim was both fragmented and adamant. It had been Miner's idea, and not his, he said. He had never seen any money from it. He didn't know if Miner had received the money. And anyway they had intended to put any money they received into a trust fund for Genie.

We were sitting in his office, a downstairs room so strewn with papers, books, old tape recorders, and film projectors that it seemed more the reliquary of a career than a place where one might still be carried on. There was a cloth-covered couch and a gray metal desk, and on the wall, amid the diplomas and citations, a print that seemed an odd choice to grace the office of a therapist. It was the optical illusion by M. C. Escher of an endless circular stairway going nowhere.

Rigler was in his late sixties, burly, gray-haired, and marked by an air of gentle domesticity and an expression of earnest and distracted kindliness. He described his feeling about the telling of Genie's story as "discomfort" and, later, as "dread." But to the degree that he was not reticent he was often confessional. Though he was too jealous of his documents cache to let me peruse it, he made repeated trips to the mysterious garage to drag out paper after video after drawing.

"Understand," he said. "No one ever came to me and said, 'Dave, you should be doing X, Y, and Z'—except for Jay Shurley, who came in with a philosophical point of view. From his work with isolation cases, he said, 'You've got to let up on the pressure gradually, as though you had someone with the bends and you were bringing them to the surface. Let her come out a little at a time.' That had an impact on me. It was a useful notion. I don't think Shurley ever understood how much I tried to use his ideas."

Rigler stared at his hands awhile. "But it's one thing to come up with theories, and another to figure out what to do at breakfast," he said. "Someone had to meet the demands of research, and someone had to meet Genie's therapeutic needs, and I had both roles. And I was always aware that it was tricky mixing the two. I had a lot of ambivalence about it, at times. But in terms of the way we treated Genie—the things we did—I think we did about as good a job as anyone could have done. As far as the complexities of the case went, I wish they hadn't been there. In my hopes, I was blind to the complexities. They inhibited me from working right. There was no way of getting informed consent here, which has become a byword in human research. Genie never gave any indication that the filming or other activities were an imposition. If she had, we would have cut them out. Occasionally, we would get signs that she was stressed by the testing. But it's just like children's anxiety when they go to school for the first time: when they come home, they're very proud of themselves. Genie had a sense of triumph at doing many things for the first time. People don't grow when they're wrapped in cotton wool. They grow when they confront the world. The negative interpretations of the case are oversimplified, from my point of view. My own position—if I can psychoanalyze myself—was not one of expectation but of hope. The sky was not high enough for my hopes, but my expectations were down to earth. One easy out would have been for me to say early on that I would be much less involved. If I'd known what the outcome would be, I wouldn't have touched it—the outcome in general, and for me."

Other members of the Genie Team feel as bruised as Rigler does. They have imposed what amounts to a gag order on themselves and speak of the case reluctantly. As a result, a prominent piece of science has been forced into the shadows. Nevertheless, the research on Genie has proved its utility. "Genie was one of the first times scientists had used a case of an atypical child to understand the typical," Curtiss told me one evening recently, as we sat talking at her kitchen table. "During the Genie research, a lot of other projects of that sort started." Curtiss's house was a modest clapboard bungalow a few blocks from the Santa Monica Freeway, in the vast Los Angeles flatland. The soupçon of yard outside would not have accommodated a volleyball game. Her husband, John, had lured their two young daughters away to leave us alone to talk, and the drone of a television sitcom and an occasional fit of giggles escaped from the living room.

Curtiss is currently studying children who have had diseased or damaged halves of their brains removed. What Genie suffered functionally, they have suffered physically. "I want to know to what extent hemispherectomied children can acquire grammar," Curtiss said. "The question is, how well can the right hemisphere do in supporting grammar functions? Is the left hemisphere essential?"

I recalled that this was a woman who had said of her younger self that hospitals were not her strong point—a woman of whom Jean Butler had said that she did not respond well to children. But watching her with her daughters and with her hemispherectomied subjects, I saw that children draw an easy, playful kindness from her. Curtiss is, in any case, a person of unsuspected softnesses. She had told me firmly when we first met that she would talk only about science—that her personal history with Genie was out of bounds. But at the end of that interview, and of each thereafter, she violated her own restriction and, without prompting, spoke movingly of her feelings for the child she had investigated. "I developed a need for her," Curtiss would say. "I missed her when she wasn't in my life."

Over a meal and dessert, and now over uncleared dishes, Curtiss and I had concluded our final hour of syntax and semantics, critical periods and hemispherectomies. As I folded up a notebook and put away a pencil, she veered again out of the confident realm of research and into that forbidden personal room. There was desolation in her voice. "I would pay a lot of money to see her," she said. "I would do a lot. I haven't heard from her in years. And I've heard only two reports. The last one was that she was speaking very little, that she was withdrawn, depressed. Genie was very lovable. She was beautiful. When John and I first met, I would tell him about her, and he would say, 'Stop! Stop! You're building this person up so much that if I meet her I'll be disillusioned. No one can be that wonderful.' Then he met her, and when we left he said, 'My God! Why didn't you tell me?' "

Curtiss's older daughter pirouetted into the kitchen to show us her sunglasses. The earpieces were gone, and the lenses, perched on her nose, were heart-shaped. She leaned into her mother, and Curtiss put an arm around her shoulder, but her mind was elsewhere, and the little girl skittered back to the living room.

"What is it that language can do for a person?" Curtiss asked. "It allows us to cognize, to think, and that's important to me, because I'm that type of person. It also allows us to share ourselves with others—our ideas and thoughts. And that provides a huge part of what I consider to be human in my existence. Genie learned how to encode concepts through words. She used language as a tool: she could label things, ideas, emotions. It afforded her a completely new way to interact with her world. If I had to choose the pieces of language that would serve me best in being human, they would be the parts Genie had. It was from her we learned of her past. She told us of her feelings. She shared her heart and mind. From that perspective, who cares about grammar? Acquiring those parts of language didn't cure her. She's unbearably disturbed. But it allowed her to share herself with others. For years after I was not permitted to see her again, I would wonder about what I would say to her if I saw her. Not just how would I react—I know I would give her a hug—but what I would say. She is the most powerful, most inspiring person I've ever met. I'd give up my job, I'd change careers, to see her again. I worked with her, and I knew her as a friend. And, of the two, the important thing was getting to know her. I would give up the rest to know her again."

AFTER the death of her husband, in 1982, Jean Butler Ruch continued to live in a beach house they had bought in Santa Monica. On visits there with her mother, Genie would stand inside the sliding glass doors, her hands held up before her in her persisting bunny posture, and watch the waves that had once so frightened and delighted her. Ruch's letter writing continued; the campaign culminated in her plans to write a book with Jay Shurley, setting the record straight. ("I was bent on revelation," Shurley says. "She was bent on revenge.") The project was cut short in

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1986 by a stroke—the result of vasculitis, which Ruch had suffered since childhood. It left her aphasic, unable to speak coherently; believers in fate might have found her final torment a tragic irony. In 1989, a further stroke killed her.

One late-spring day, I went to see Shurley. His study is an aluminum-sided sun porch tacked on to the back of his home in Oklahoma City. Through the open doorway leading to the back yard I could hear the tinkling of wind chimes, and the constant chirping of finches in the silver maples.

Shurley had unearthed for my benefit two cartons filled with manila folders and set them on his desk. They were his Genie files. As he talked with me during the next several days, he would dip into the boxes for letters, symposium papers, the scribbled logs of phone conversations he had had with Rigler, Ruch, Kent, and Hansen almost twenty years before. There was a file marked "Sleep Spindles" in one of the boxes, but by and large what he had preserved in his cardboard repository was not the science of Genie but the experience. The question that tormented him lay somewhere beyond the data.

"Here," Shurley said, reaching into a carton. The files were labelled "Genie Emerges" and "Jean's Input" and "Genie Book" (in the outline of which Genie's life was divided into Genesis and Exodus). He pulled out one labelled "Photos."

The first picture he handed me was of a nondescript house, seen from across a street through a picket of royal palms. Pages of a newspaper blow across a yard through the cold gray shade of a lemon tree. A second photograph was of the same house, but it was taken from the drive, where Irene stands in a plaid skirt and holds a cloth purse tight against her smooth yellow cardigan, as though expecting a sudden chill. It is the day, soon after her acquittal, when the house was first opened for inspection by curious strangers.

"Irene had all the instincts of motherhood, to my mind," Shurley said. "And she was very thwarted, and she was very weak. Only after a long period of befriending by Jean Ruch was Irene able to stand up and reassert herself. I remember some years ago, when she was living in almost abject poverty, one of the big networks—maybe overseas—came along and offered her ten thousand dollars for the story, and put all these documents in front of her, and she told them firmly 'No.' I was there at the time—at least, I was in Los Angeles and talking with her—and I was amazed at the strength of her fear, or the strength of her conviction."

Shurley set the pictures of the house aside and drew a rectangle on a piece of notebook paper. He divided it up into smaller rectangles. "Here is the room they said was a shrine to Clark's mother," he said. "It was the master bedroom, and it was almost completely filled with the bed. It wasn't very large. Here's the living room, and there was a chair here, and the television, which didn't work. Clark slept in the chair most of the time. He slept there, and here is the pallet where his son slept, on the floor." He drew a square in the corner for Genie's room. "She had a window here, and another around the corner, over here. The dresser was here, between them, and here is where she slept." He drew a small rectangle and labelled it "CRIB."

"And here is the potty chair," he said. "Sometimes it was over here." Shurley looked up and then back, and drew a yard around Genie's house, with a driveway and a lemon tree.

The next several photographs were taken on that same winter day, but they were taken inside, in Genie's room. The room was dim. Here were the closet doors—three plywood panels with chrome pull handles. The dresser was pine and had four drawers. And here were the two windows, the upper half of each covered by a shade. Yellowish half-curtains draped the lower halves, their fabric thin and patterned with red flowers. One window's curtain had been pulled back and was fastened to the wall with packaging tape. "Genie's room was not sensory deprivation so much as sensory monotony," Shurley said. "Monotony. You know, variety is not the spice of life; it's the very stuff of life. To the development of a defensible, adaptable ego, monotony is deadly. In that little room, a person would project internal images, not absorb outside ones, and would become confused about what was real and what was imagined—would lose the ability to differentiate between dream and waking. Socially isolated children usually have psychotic parents who treat them as animals. There is no encouragement of any human closeness. It is typical for them to be locked in a closet—it isn't rare. There was a boy here in Oklahoma City recently who was four years old, and his parents were keeping him penned with the dogs in back of the house. He walked on all fours. Genie remains by a good bit the kingpin of these cases. She has the record. Though it's not a record that anyone would envy."

The next photograph had been taken half a year later. It was summer, and Genie was sitting on a floor, laughing and alert. A note on the back of the photograph read, "This photo was taken about three days after she came to stay with me (she has hospital p.j.s on)." The note is in Jean Ruch's hand. "The ability of that little girl to elicit emotion on the part of the observer was fantastic," Shurley said. "You had to witness it. Just hearing about it would be orders of magnitude from the actual experience. Jean and Floyd Ruch, they were almost obsessed with this child. Jean really did latch on to Genie in the early days, and it was reciprocated. Jean, of course, had never had a child of her own. Rigler had three and felt that experience was on his side. But after I got to know Jean I didn't see anything to suggest that she wouldn't be a good foster parent. She was the teacher, and had developed a very positive relationship with Genie within a couple of weeks. I never found the Riglers to be that warm or empathetic with her. At their house, it was as though Genie were being studied in a cold frame rather than in a hothouse. I understand some of Rigler's feelings about Jean Ruch. She had a very interesting paradoxical streak: she could be extraordinarily kind and sensitive to children—and she was, as teacher to some very disabled and sick children—and then she was capable of doing malicious and, I'll say, sadistic things, not to the children but to those who she felt were in disagreement with her about how the children should be treated. But to several of us, it seemed a pity that Genie could not be with someone like Ruch, who would bond to her as a person and not as a scientific case. Be-

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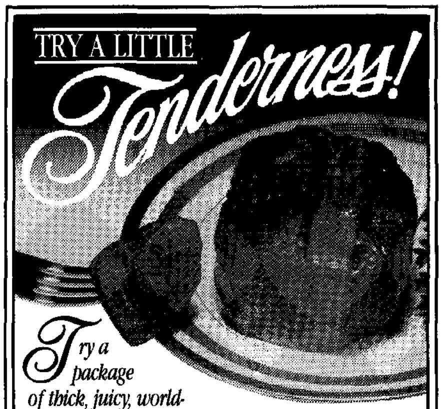

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sides, I tend to go with the child. If the child says, 'I like this person,' there's something real there that a child can latch on to. To adults there may be things that don't seem right, that cause concern. But the child's instinct is usually right on the issue that's most important."

There were a few other photographs from the summer of 1971: Genie at an art gallery, stepping into a patch of bright sun in a smart maroon dress with a white collar and big white pockets; Genie in a swimsuit at the beach, concentrating with apparent delight as a receding wave washes around her feet, and holding her hand up in the O.K. sign, the tip of the forefinger joined to the tip of the thumb.

The last two photographs were of someone else, or so I thought: a large, bumbling woman with a facial expression of cowlike incomprehension. In one picture, the woman sits in a car pretending to drive, her eyes at half mast, her front teeth protruding in a drawn grin, a starburst reflection of palm tops floating in the windshield glass. In the second, the woman is indoors. She is about to cut a birthday cake with white frosting. Her eyes focus poorly on the cake. Her dark hair has been hacked off raggedly at the top of her forehead, giving her the aspect of an asylum inmate. Something about her dress is sad and reminiscent: it is shapeless and has red flowers. Her right hand grips the cake knife, and her left hand is held in front of her, forefinger touching thumb.

Shurley watched grimly as my recognition dawned. "Her twenty-seventh birthday party," he said. "I was there, and then I saw her again when she was twenty-nine, and she still looked miserable. She looked to me like a chronically institutionalized person. It was heartbreaking." A note by Shurley on the back of the photograph read, "Genie is very stooped and rarely makes eye contact. This photo was at her happiest, other than when momentarily greeting her mother and me an hour earlier."

As I turned the photograph back over, my association with the dress came clear to me. "Irene sewed it," Shurley told me. "She'd been a master seamstress before her eyesight went." The dress, its thin weight and floral pattern, reminded me of the curtains in the little room.

"What do you make of her expression?" I asked Shurley.

"What do I make of it?" he said. "She looks demented." He paused, and then spoke intensely, as though he were at the center of something. "The way I think of Genie, she was this isolated person, incarcerated for all those years, and then she emerged and lived in a more reasonable world for a while, and responded to this world, and then the door was shut and she withdrew again and her soul was sick." Without looking away from my face, he pointed to the photograph of the woman in the car. "This is soul sickness," he said. "There is no medical explanation for her decline into what appears to be organic, biological dementia."

For a while, Shurley seemed disinclined to speak, and we listened to the finches in the yard. Then he said, "At the time that Genie came to light, I went back to try to find, anywhere I could, any kind of directions. Anything that said, 'In case of tornado do this, in case of earthquake do this, and in case of an experiment in nature do this.' I found it nowhere. There's nothing of the sort. But from my experience the research with Genie could not have been handled worse. The process went off track from the day it was conceived. It went, after a little while, a hundred and eighty degrees from the direction it ought to have taken. There is a fundamental issue here that nobody has grasped. The key issue—I believe now, very strongly, in terms of my own experiences with isolation in many different contexts—is not the acute effects of the isolation. It is the problem of reëntry into the matrix from which the child has been isolated. Isolation places one's own readiness to react in a kind of cold storage. Imagine using a muscle that has been in a cast, or a sling. Once you take the encumbrance off, the muscle has to retrain itself. It's suffering from atrophy, from disuse. Rehabilitation involves figuring out how you allow the strength back without rupturing anything.

"We're born helpless. We are born into the world with no boundary between self and not-self. We spend the first twenty years of our life establishing that boundary. Children who are so abused, deprived, are losing that battle by the age of three or four. I felt that Genie was one of those—a little girl with no sense of herself as a separate, inviolable entity. I wanted Genie to come into the world as a core ego, capable of trust and mistrust. Proper reëntry is a key ingredient in treatment and in research. A proper reëntry is not one preëmpted by scientific exploitation gone wild.

"A child needs more than approval. She needs a sense of security, safety—the absolute conviction that she is worthwhile. Well, Genie grew up in a house where the father didn't like himself and the mother didn't like herself and no one liked Genie. And later she was a celebrity. All these people looking at this extremely primitive child—this larval child. In this six-year-old body, a thirteen-year-old girl. Talk about a weird kid: Genie was a weird kid. And that's how she was treated by everyone—as a weird kid: 'What do you do with a poor, weird kid like that?' Genie was viewed as a child views feces—first as a treasure, then as shit, in Anglo-Saxon terms. And, really, what did Genie, taken apart, have to offer the world? Except for her unique early-life development, not much. Not much.

"Genie's problem was seen too much as a pedagogical one, not an emotional one. We tried to teach her language. Well, I don't know. There's a problem. In Linnaeus' classification, *Homo sapiens* is known as *cultura*, not as *lingua*. Our advancements take place in a relationship. In order for an infant to learn anything—and this takes you back to Victor, the Wild Boy of Aveyron—there has to be a relationship in which the child gets enough nurturance to proceed. Affective attachment plays the primary role. It is not an intellectual process. Intellect rides on the back of affective bonding. And affection's not easy to come by. Human beings have a unique talent not only for cruelty but for indifference. Compassion was not referred to by the Enlightenment philosophers as the essential or defining characteristic of humankind. It's something in our nature that must be taught."

Shurley waved a hand dismissively. "This is old stuff," he said. "I resolved that if I lived long enough I would do a case study that would show how things should be approached in cases like this. These experiments come along. Victor in 1800. Kaspar Hauser in the eighteen-twenties, I believe. Genie in 1970. None of the wild children have been handled well. All of them were handled the way Genie was. She *could* have been handled well. She would have been a disappointment in some ways, but the outcome would have been happier. Genie arrived at the hospital, and within the first couple of months she became hungry. She came out of an environment that was unfriendly but consistent. Now she was in a new environment, with noise and other kids. A hospital is an overstimulating place. The problem was how to get her out of it and into a home. But she went from one home to another. More noise. She went from famine to feast. Her response was not to take that feast. She was overwhelmed. This is part of the emergence thing. She was enormously starved, but the starvation was so chronic, so long-lasting, that she didn't trust her world to give her what she wanted. She was afraid that part of what she would be given would be toxic to her. As it turns out, she was right. These were not bad people. They just didn't allow this child to develop along normal lines. The course of research defeated the treatment, which defeated the research. The science would have fared better if the human aspect had been put first. We probably would have learned a lot more, and what we learned would have been transferrable to other cases. The only generalization you can get from this is as a bad example—an example of how not to do it.

"What I saw happen with Genie was a pretty crass form of exploitation. I had to realize that I was a part of it, and swear to refrain. It turned out that Genie, who had been so terribly abused, was exploited all over again. She was exploited extrafamilially just as she was exploited intrafamilially—just by a different cast of characters, of which I'm sorry to say I was one. As far as Genie is concerned, it's a fated case. You have a second chance in a situation like that—a chance to rescue the child. But you don't get a third chance, and that's the situation now. We can't do the experiment over. We can't go back. And that's the bitterness."

—RUSS RYMER

(*This is the second part of a two-part article.*)

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THE THEATRE

Eeeny, Meeny, Miney

CAMERON MACKINTOSH, producer and importer of such transatlantic icebergs as "Cats," "The Phantom of the Opera," and "Les Misérables," now presents another London hit, "Five Guys Named Moe." The show, which opened last week at the Eugene O'Neill, is anything but an iceberg; it's a celebration, by Clarke Peters, of the most successful numbers of Louis Jordan, which occupy, I'm told by a source as reliable as they come, a space on the borderline between jazz and rhythm and blues. Mr. Jordan wrote some of the songs, supplied the lyrics for some others, and performed or recorded all of them with his Tympany Five between 1938 and his death, in 1975.

To get it over with immediately, lest the name Moe mislead you, the guys here are black dancers and singers of extraordinary ability and spirit, who are revelling in a bout of ethnicity. Time after time, I kept telling myself, as I did at "Catskills on Broadway," that I shouldn't be enjoying this, but, once I got used to the deafening amplification, enjoy it I did. The show is no "Catskills," though. The five Moes of the title leap out of a radio to take in hand and console a lonely, lovelorn fellow called Nomax (Jerry Dixon). That is the entire libretto. But there is something irresistible about a huge man like Doug Eskew, as Big Moe, who is so fast on his feet and limber that he seems boneless, and can sing, and speak whatever lines he has, with some conviction. The other Moes—Milton Craig Nealy, Kevin Ramsey, Jeffrey D. Sams, and Glenn Turner—are just as appealing. Most of the songs were unfamiliar to me, though I was certainly around at the time, and I doubt I'll remember them even now; the few exceptions are "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying," "Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens," and, above all, "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby?" The numbers come in many varieties—calypso and minstrel show and even a pesky conga line among them—but the performance is consistently entertaining. What Eugene O'Neill would have made of it I cannot imagine. The impressive choreography and direction are by Charles Augins. —EDITH OLIVER

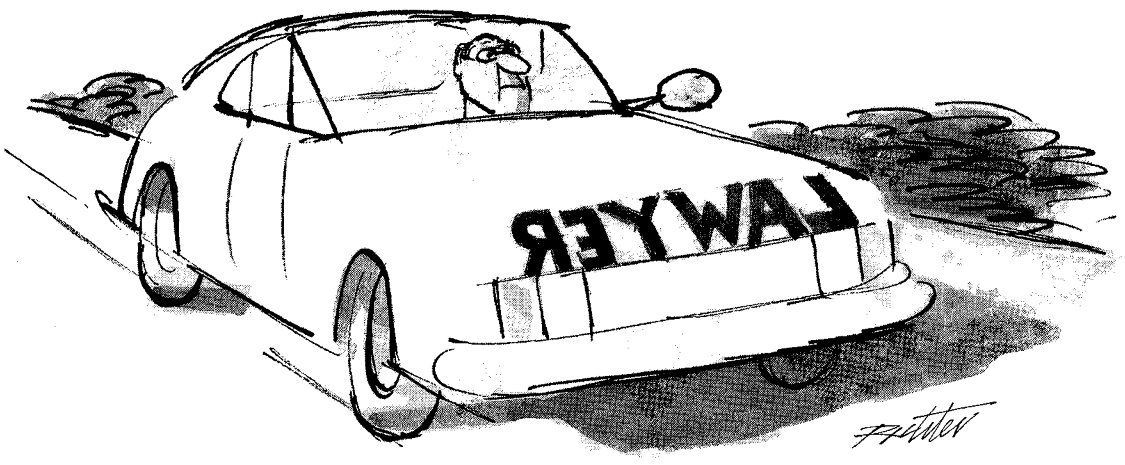
Victims

THE production of John Ford's "'Tis Pity She's a Whore" that opened at the Public Theatre the first week of April, directed by JoAnne Akalaitis, is surprisingly engrossing. Like the production of "Pericles" that Michael Greif directed earlier this season, it features a company of capable actors, two able stars, a consistent vision of the play, and a couple of tour-de-force performances from actors in secondary roles. The stars in this instance are Val Kilmer and Jeanne Tripplehorn, who play the siblings Giovanni and Annabella—Giovanni being the young man who, against some of the best advice in Jacobean tragedy, enters into an incestuous relationship with his sister at the beginning of the play and, at the end of it, appears at a banquet with her heart on a stake.

Mr. Kilmer, who played Jim Morrison, the lead singer for the Doors, in Oliver Stone's movie of that title, also played a rock star in one of those Abrahams/Zucker spoofs. An actor like that, who knows how to play a rock star's temperament—whether in earnest or in jest—as opposed to one who merely possesses a rock star's temperament (like the young actors in the Brat Pack school), isn't a bad bet to play a Jacobean revenge hero. Callowness and a deceptive air of durability are the key here, for Giovanni is Hamlet without a conscience or an intellect. Watching him in the grip of something larger and stronger than himself, we have to believe that he thinks he is in control.

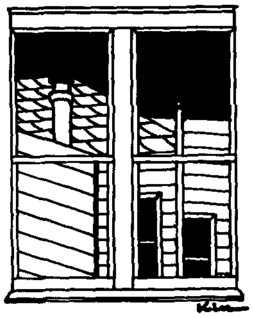
In the case of Annabella, we have to believe that she could go from thinking incest unthinkable to thinking it no big deal, and in very short order. If Annabella is too degenerate or too simple, her seduction will fail to be interesting, and that's why it isn't a bad idea, either, to cast an actress who knows how to play a victim without playing a sap. Miss Tripplehorn, who appears in the controversial date-rape scene in the new slasher movie "Basic Instinct," and who got browbeaten and slathered with Vaseline in the last John Shanley play at the Public, manages to seem both intelligent and vulnerable. Watching Mr. Kilmer come on to her, you feel that if he were your brother you'd put out, too.

Unlike Mr. Kilmer, Miss Tripplehorn has trouble with the poetry, but she makes intelligible a particular brand of female naïveté, which the play, especially in Ms. Akalaitis's production, proves to be about. Yes, Jacobean revenge tragedy amounts to little more than a seventeenth-century version of "Basic Instinct," but even cheap thrills command a subtext, and Ms. Akalaitis's production suggests that the subtext of Ford's play is the phenomenon we call sexual harassment—the process by which predatory men prevail with women by trading on the very customs and laws that make women feel safe. In Ford's play, women of all sorts (vulgar, innocent, elegant, cor-



rupt) are turned against and punished for allowing themselves to be seduced—punished by the very men who lured them into their beds or their confidence. What this production skillfully brings out is that Giovanni's seduction and murder of Annabella—the play's paradigm for feminine trust elicited and betrayed—has more to do with sexual politics than with sex.

Ms. Akalaitis has updated the play to the Fascist Italy of the nineteen-thirties, to create the sense of an ossified, decadent, and repressive moral order, and in dealing with the violence she has opted for all-out realism, which is the only way to approach these plays. John Conklin's scenic design employs an idea of art-through-the-ages: a system of de Chirico archways, in which characters can eavesdrop or take shelter from the rain; sculpture fragments—a foot, an armless statue—that prefigure some of the violence; scenes in the Mannerist style appearing aloft behind a scrim; a Dadaist design on the cyclorama; and, here and there, surrealist distortions of humanity.



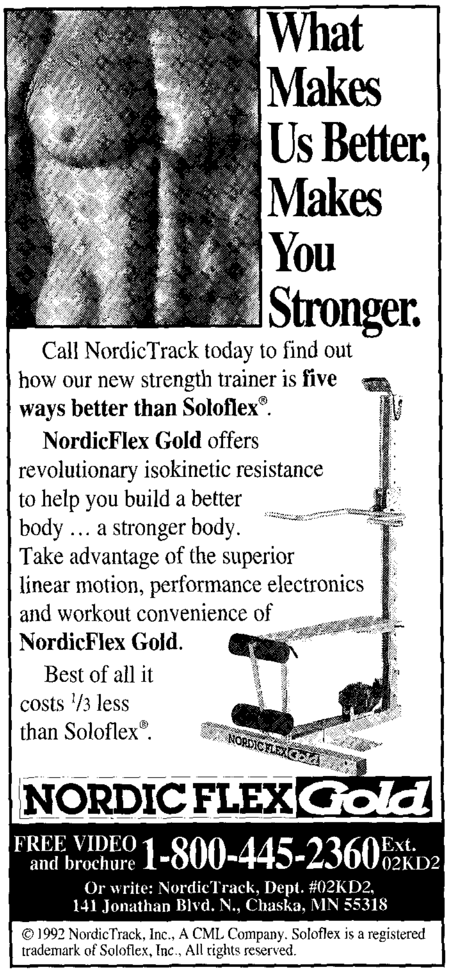
I liked Erick Avari's Alan Rickman turn in the Iago role, and Deirdre O'Connell's Putana and Ross Lehman's Bergetto—particularly the way their performances marshalled contempt, affection, and pity. Less popular with me were the dumb-show wedding at the beginning of Act II and the poisoning scene—two sequences that find Ms. Akalaitis up to her old pseudo-avant-garde tricks (twitching and slo-mo). I could also have done without Jan A. P. Kaczmarek's incessant electronic music and Daniel Oreskes' Mussolini impression, and without Jared Harris, who plays Soranzo—or, anyway, without his bluster and mannerisms and speech impediment. And Ellen McElduff's portrayal of Hippolita as a raving, scheming villainess—which is how she is described—seemed at variance with Ms. Akalaitis's insightful interpretation: the whole point is that what the men say of the women and what we see of them are two different things.

“THE END OF THE DAY,” Jon Robin Baitz's new play, at Playwrights Horizons, has to be more interesting than Mark Lamos's production gives it credit for being. Mr. Baitz is a subtle playwright; he creates characters of dazzling complexity—moral arbiters and moral victims, like the ones in “The Film Society” and “The Substance of Fire”—who walk a tightrope between loathsomeness and vulnerability. For all I know, his new protagonist, an expatriate Brit physician (Roger Rees) trying to find his moral center in Southern California, is one of those characters, but Mr. Lamos's production is such a hopeless muddle that you can't tell. All you can say for sure is that the play's two strains—a comic one, about the doctor's relations with the family of his estranged wife, and a melancholic one, about his relations with his own family and a cancer patient—never come together in any sort of harmony.

You don't give a play a title like “The End of the Day,” and make sure that the phrase keeps cropping up in ways that mean different things—a reckoning, death, privilege, impending loss—and introduce an object that evokes all the same themes (in this case, a priceless George Stubbs painting), unless you have a pretty good idea of what you're doing. And you don't write a play, like this one, in which actors are supposed to double in complementary and contrasting roles, British and American, unless your idea is for the audience to be surprised and delighted by the range and subtlety of the performances. Unfortunately, Mr. Lamos has come at Baitz's play with the same sledgehammer approach that made his recent productions of “Measure for Measure” and “Our Country's Good” so numbingly boring. From a cast that includes fine actors like Nancy Marchand and Jean Smart he has elicited caricatures of such desperate crudeness and sameness that the doubling is an embarrassment and all Mr. Baitz's careful observations go for naught.

Ordinarily, I wouldn't steer anyone away from a Baitz play (or from a chance to see Mr. Rees or Miss Marchand perform), but in this case I'd say wait for another production. There's bound to be one.

—MIMI KRAMER



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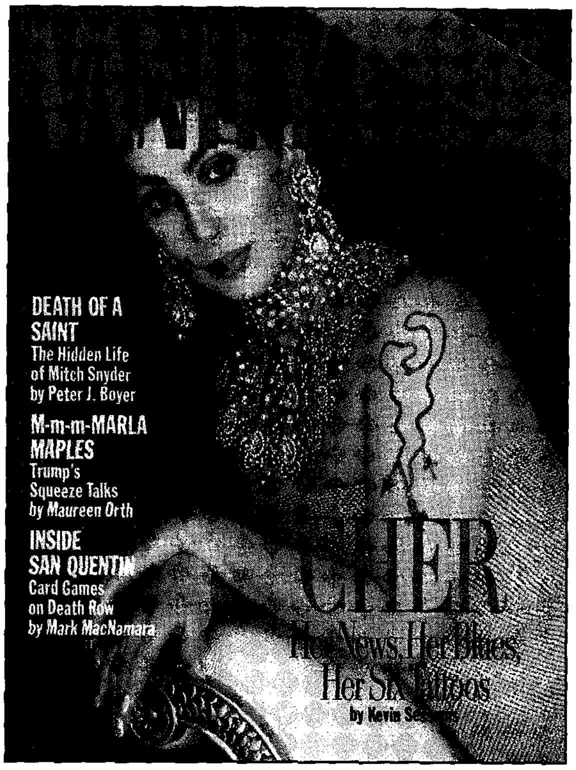
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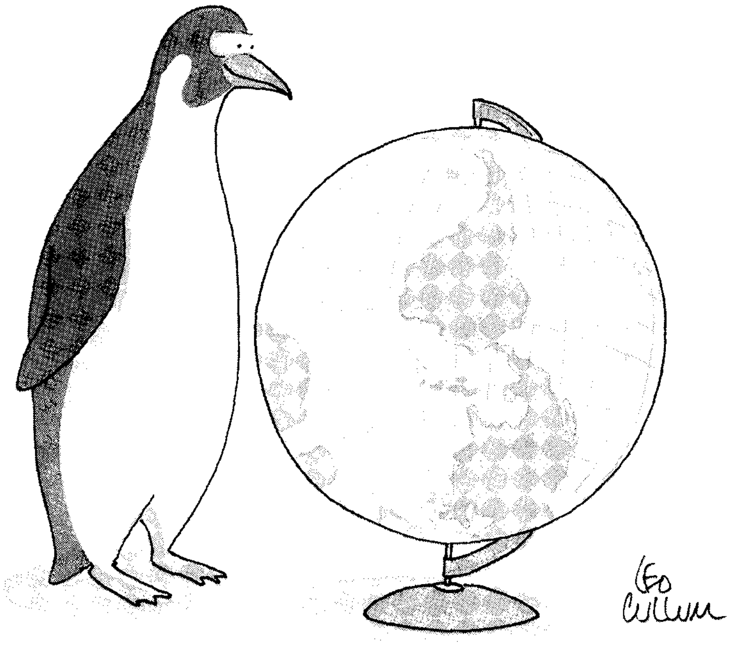
THE CURRENT CINEMA

Killer

THE title character of Robert Altman's "The Player" is a young Hollywood studio executive named Griffin Mill (Tim Robbins), who, for no very good reason, murders an aspiring screenwriter. The picture is a brilliant dark comedy about the death of American filmmaking, and the protagonist, charming and smart and impeccably turned out, is a pure incarnation of the forces that squeeze the life out of adventurous moviemakers. The idea that corporate smoothies like Griffin are killers—and proud of it—isn't a surprising one, but the screenplay, by Michael Tolkin, who also wrote the 1988 novel on which the film is based, embellishes this obvious joke with wickedly ingenious riffs. You can sense the vengeful pleasure Tolkin takes in building the case against Griffin. The novel is a writer's lovingly detailed portrait of an enemy, and it's frighteningly acute: it has the obsessive precision of nursed paranoia. An adversary who wields power as skillfully and as unscrupulously as Griffin Mill does is impossible to beat: the only small satisfaction available to the bruised loser lies in understanding the beast out of existence—dissecting it, classifying it, handling it (mentally) like a laboratory specimen.

And Tolkin has this character nailed. He seems to know things about studio executives that they don't know about themselves, and that's not because he's more intelligent than they are or because he has a finer moral sense but because Hollywood is a mirror world, a culture in which every encounter is an intricate dance of images projected and reflected. In the opening sequence of "The Player"—an insolently elaborate eight-minute tracking shot—we see a succession of writers nervously pitching story ideas to Griffin, and they're all trying to speak what they imagine is the executive's language. "It's 'Ghost' meets 'The Manchurian Candidate,'" one of them babbles. They want to demonstrate that they know how to think in his terms, and they seem to have put a lot of effort into figuring out how to make their stories play in the theatre of Griffin Mill's consciousness: they've spent more time prowling the inside of his head than he has. The goal for each of them is, in a sense, to *become* him: to internalize the essence of Griffin Mill so thoroughly that the mimicry doesn't show at all. At this point, theoretically, the participants in the meeting will have achieved such sublime rapport that the writer's ideas will strike the executive as his own. (Fundamentally, they are.) And that's how a writer like Tolkin can know the mind of a movie executive with uncanny intimacy: Hollywood screenwriters and directors learn to negate themselves and reinvent themselves in the image of their enemy. In "The Player" Tolkin and Altman turn this depressing process into a kind of nightmarish slapstick. The insular, constantly self-regarding culture of the movie community here combines the sinister ambiguity of the hall-of-mirrors shootout in "The Lady from Shanghai," in which bullets shatter image after image in silvered glass as the opponents search wildly for their real targets, with the deep silliness of the scene from "Duck Soup" in which Harpo imitates Groucho's gestures so precisely that Groucho thinks he's watching himself in a mirror.

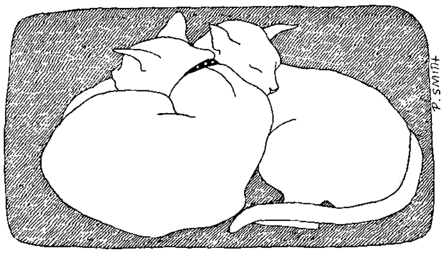
"The Player" is like a documentary about a mirage. The world Altman shows us is sunlit and shimmering, and the people have the thin presence of holograms. That's their reality, and Altman looks at them with the same sort of playfully inquisitive gaze he trained on the country singers of "Nashville" and the political campaigners of the HBO series "Tanner '88." In this picture Altman is doing one of his specialties: exploring an odd American subculture—revealing its distinctive textures and explicating the peculiar principles of social intercourse which keep it functioning. But when his idiosyncratic style of anthropological realism is applied to the tight community of Hollywood "players" it has an almost hallucinatory effect. Part of the movie's verisimilitude is that wherever Griffin goes—every chic restaurant, every charity banquet, every cocktail party—he runs into movie stars. Cher, Jack Lemmon, Nick Nolte, Anjelica Huston, Burt Reynolds, and dozens of other famous faces pop up throughout the picture, most of them for just a few seconds. These people are the everyday cast of characters in the protagonist's life, the people that a man in his position would naturally move among; but, even as we're saying "Of course" and admiring the ease with which Altman weaves the celebrities into the social textures of the movie, we're jarred every time one of these well-known figures materializes in the background of a scene. There seems to be a glaze on them, a light protective shield of perfectly achieved artifice. We laugh at how completely the stars fill the outlines of our images of them, how conscientiously they satisfy our expectations. They look as if they were doing dead-on impersonations of themselves, and after a while we begin to get an eerie, unsettled feeling. In this way (and many others), the picture seems to take us through mimetic realism, as through a looking glass, and out the other side: we find ourselves, without knowing how we got there, in a



fairy-tale world of seductive apparitions and ominous doubles.

Altman isn't just playing fancy reality-and-illusion games. He's describing, with hilarious exactness, a milieu in which extreme self-consciousness—neurotically close attention to the appearance you present to society—is the norm, the quality without which survival is virtually impossible. The protagonist of "The Player" is a virtuoso of self-image calculation. Every gesture he makes, every word he speaks, every tiny nuance of personality seems to have been thought out carefully, and by an unusually subtle and flexible mind. Griffin is so good at orchestrating the impression he wants to make in any given situation that in a sense he doesn't really exist. There *is* no essence of Griffin Mill, no core to his personality: he's no more than the sum of his acquired and meticulously arranged traits, an automaton that has programmed itself, with exquisite adaptability, for success. At the beginning of the film, we see him at his most likable: he's sympathetic because he's in a bit of a panic. The machinery isn't functioning as efficiently as he wants it to, and he can't put his finger on what's wrong. A rival executive is maneuvering to usurp his power at the studio, and he has also received threatening anonymous postcards from an embittered writer. In his confusion—his inability to make the adjustments necessary to reëstablish control over his life—Griffin seems almost human. He's clearly upset by the wrath of the nameless writer, who has announced, rather grandly, his intention of killing Griffin in the name of writers everywhere. This venom is especially puzzling to Griffin because he has cultivated the reputation of being a "writer's executive": the postcards violate his image of himself. Searching his files for a suspect—or, at least, for a comparable "nobody" writer to whom he can make some sort of symbolic amends—he finds the name David Kahane, and he contrives an accidental-seeming meeting at an out-of-the-way revival cinema. In the course of this awkwardly engineered encounter, Kahane (Vincent D'Onofrio), who has a rude, abrasive manner, taunts Griffin mercilessly and finally goes too far: in a dark parking lot, the executive loses his cool and kills the writer. The murder is the most beautiful, the most profoundly funny joke in the movie. It's the only spontaneous, unrehearsed act the hero performs, and we realize, gradually, that the crime is the moment when Griffin Mill finds his essence: the core of his being is his hatred of writers, his fear of the unruliness of imagination. In a story meeting the next day, his colleagues muse aloud about the possibility of eliminating the writer from the moviemaking process. Griffin has actually done, in the most concrete way, what they only dream of, and that knowledge makes him a stronger, more confident corporate manipulator. At the start of the movie, he strikes us as a clever, amiably superficial young man. By the end, his features seem to have acquired greater definition, to have taken on a different and much scarier look—the look of a winner.

Tim Robbins, a wonderfully inventive actor, makes that progression feel utterly believable. His Griffin Mill is a layered, richly suggestive comic creation: the sort of performance that Robert Altman's filmmaking style, at its best, produces without obvious effort. "The Player" has the exhilarating nonchalance of Altman's seventies classics, and its tone is volatile, elusive. With breathtaking assurance, the movie veers from psychological-thriller suspense to goofball comedy to icy satire: it's Patricia Highsmith meets Monty Python meets Nathanael West. When Altman is in form, as he is here, everything seems to meet in front of his cameras: the most disparate personalities and voices come together, in combinations as unexpectedly right as the gathering at the end of "Nashville," with stars and impassioned amateurs and a huge audience and a killer all crowded on or around a great stage in the open air. "The Player" resists every attempt to pin it down: there's too much life in it, too much movement, too many flickering changes of mood to sort out. The movie turns the self-reflective world of Hollywood into a fun house in which every grotesque distortion somehow appears to us as a newly discovered, paradoxical truth. In this comedy-thriller, even the most familiar genre elements become their opposites: the humor has the satisfying inevitability of a superbly constructed thriller plot, in which every clue clicks right into place, and the suspense has the giddy, unpredictable rhythms of improvisational comedy.



One of the ironies surrounding "The Player" is that the movie has given Altman some credibility in Hollywood, for the first time in years: the studio people are impressed by this not at all flattering portrait of their values and life style. Go figure. Maybe they are happy to see any reflection of themselves and are so narcissistic that they don't know how bad they look, or maybe they really are proud of being killers. The joke will be on them, though, if this picture reminds the audience, as it should, of how invigorating movies can be when they're made freely, when the ideas haven't been shaped to fit the limited contours of the executive mind. "The Player" is in itself a peerless reproach to the studio system, a vindication of the joys of imagination. It's the work of a man who makes movies with the grace of a master, and who hasn't yet learned how to be anyone but himself. At sixty-seven, Robert Altman is still the youngest filmmaker in America.

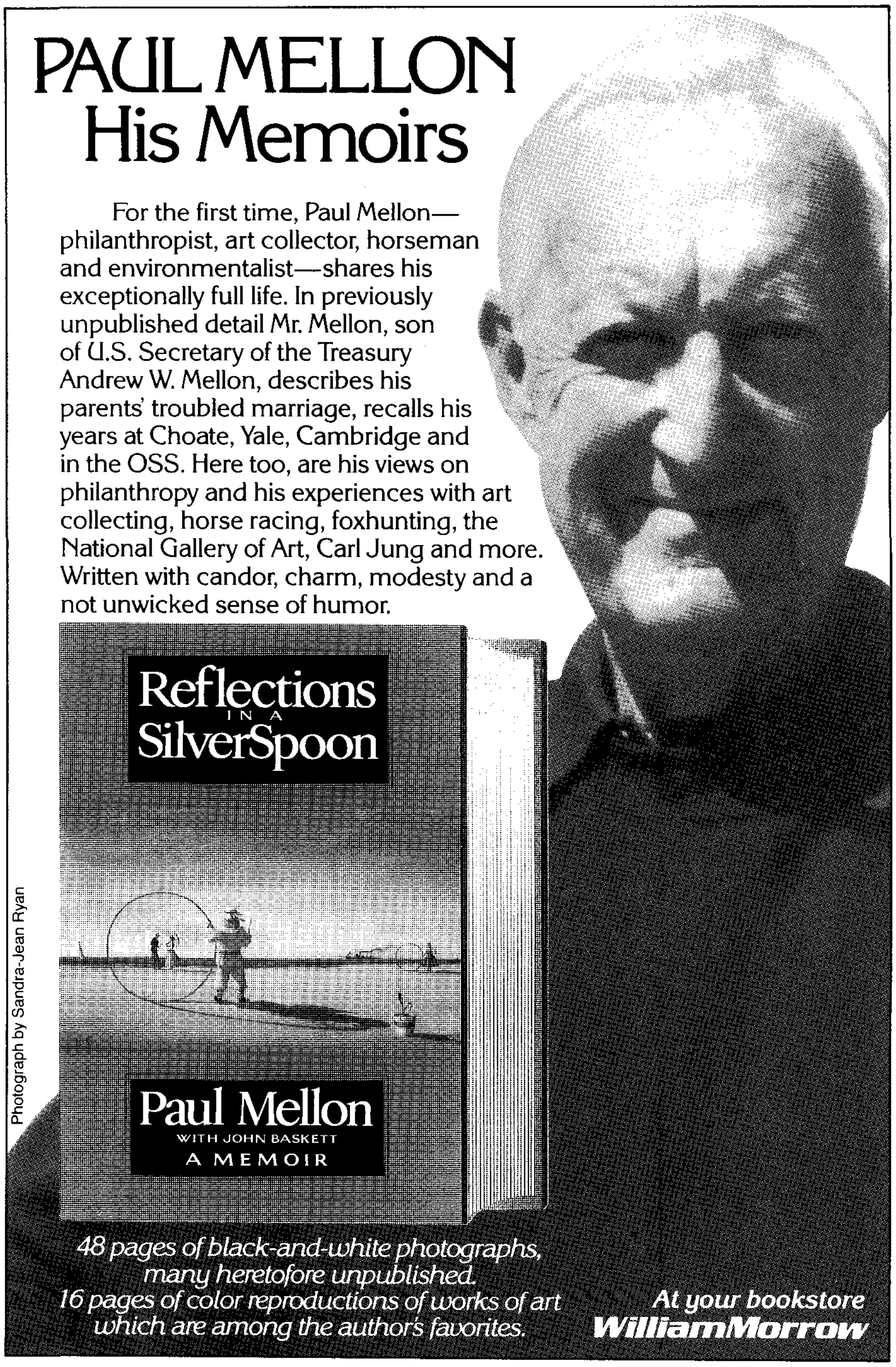
—TERRENCE RAFFERTY

Whistling Dixie

"WE'RE attracting a rainbow coalition—one-third black, one-third Indian, and one-third white." That's how a distribution executive accounts for the success of "Mississippi Masala," the latest variation on "Romeo and Juliet." This time, the Capulets are Indian refugees from Uganda, and the Montagues are African-Americans who live and work with them in Greenwood, Mississippi, circa 1990. Denzel Washington stars as Demetrius, a can-do guy with his own carpet-cleaning business; Sarita Choudhury, in her film début, plays Mina, a vaguely dissatisfied motel maid. If Demetrius and Mina are meant for each other, it's solely because they're the best-looking couple in town. What puts the film over with art-house moviegoers is its easygoing exotica. The director, Mira Nair, introduces viewers to a milieu in which Indians perform their extravagantly colored rituals while competing with whites in the motel trade and keeping a friendly distance from blacks.

In the screwball-romance setup, Mina rear-ends Demetrius's van in a tri-racial collision. (Demetrius had paused for a white driver.) Nair extracts humor from the Indians' insularity, and gives Demetrius's clan (led by that wily scene-stealer Joe Seneca) a separate but equally funky texture. The director sets the screen for a tale of lovers bursting free from family-bred claustrophobia and reaching for grander things than motel work or carpet cleaning, but their romance fails to move past physical attraction. That's more than a disappointment; it's a crippling letdown. The keen-eyed cinematographer, Ed Lachman, luxuriates in the contrast of dark- and light-chocolate skins. Yet the most erotic moments come when we see Washington and Choudhury talking to each other on the phone; for a few instants, their love seems part of a generalized longing, as it usually is with adolescents, not adults. The camera fixes on Choudhury's melting eyes. Throughout, Washington is a genuine star: drama jumps from his square-cut features. His acting here, like Choudhury's non-acting, is appealing, even if it's all show.

The film has a thrilling prologue, dramatizing Idi Amin's expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972, supposedly for manipulating the economy at the expense of blacks. This vision of racism never disappears; it haunts the eloquent face of Roshan Seth, who plays Mina's father. The crux of the movie is designed to be the distrust between the Indian and the African-American communities. But their fractiousness is absorbed in Nair's outpouring of liberal, cosmopolitan good will. If all hell breaks loose when Mina's relatives catch her in bed with Demetrius, most of the demons arise from a white state that makes clashing subcultures feel antsy and insecure. Without particularity or persuasiveness, Nair peddles an up-to-date peace-and-love ideology. She's created a movie for the multiculture. According to Nair, *masala* is "a Hindi word which literally means a mixture of hot spices of different colors." She portrays vibrant but isolated black and Indian enclaves doing their best to survive in white America, and hails Demetrius and Mina as explorers of a brave new interracial world. Nair's intentions come through clearly in the final credits, when she



PAUL MELLON
His Memoirs

For the first time, Paul Mellon—philanthropist, art collector, horseman and environmentalist—shares his exceptionally full life. In previously unpublished detail Mr. Mellon, son of U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Andrew W. Mellon, describes his parents' troubled marriage, recalls his years at Choate, Yale, Cambridge and in the OSS. Here too, are his views on philanthropy and his experiences with art collecting, horse racing, foxhunting, the National Gallery of Art, Carl Jung and more. Written with candor, charm, modesty and a not unwicked sense of humor.

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provides a glimpse of Demetrius in a dashiki and Mina in her Indian garb swaying and embracing. It's meant as an affirmative vision. But we already know that these two can dance together; the question is, Do they have anything to say to each other?

THE recipe behind another Dixie-based hit, "My Cousin Vinny," is simpler. The Southern characters consider themselves the salt of the earth; the Northern ones are proud to be the pepper. Joe Pesci plays Vinny Gambini, a neophyte Brooklyn lawyer who hightails it down to Wahzoo City, Alabama, to help his college-boy cousin (Ralph Macchio) and a friend (Mitchell Whitfield) beat a bum murder rap. Vinny's quest takes at least thirty minutes too long. The producer-screenwriter, Dale Launer, bides his time, scattering hoary gags (there's an excruciating double-entendre prison scene) while planting details that eventually pay off. Luckily, the director, Jonathan Lynn, keeps the cork on Pesci, releasing his energy only in the trial sequences. Not that Pesci displays any hidden resources—he's nasally depressive, then nasally aggressive. But Lynn doesn't rely on him to carry the movie. Marisa Tomei, as Vinny's fiancée, imbues even the most obligatory reactions with either a startling ferocity or a farcical ambiguity worthy of her character's name: Mona Lisa Vito. Fred Gwynne brings a wise, weighty charm to the role of a Yale-educated judge; in a cartoon, he'd be a basset hound called Beauregard.

Why is this film so popular? Perhaps because it gives Pesci a chance to combine his commercial signature, pop scabrousness, with old-fashioned virtues like "heart." Vinny wants to be a good lawyer; his fiancée wants him to win his case and marry her. In this down-home fantasy, Pesci gets to be tough and silly while also being earnest and sincere. Lynn doesn't leave him stranded, as he was in "The Super"; when the little guy sags, Tomei, Gwynne, and the others perk him up. At its best, "My Cousin Vinny" is a genial variety show that could use more variety. —MICHAEL SRAGOW

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Humans can cause disturbance by eradicating entire communities.—*Photo caption in Wildflower magazine.*

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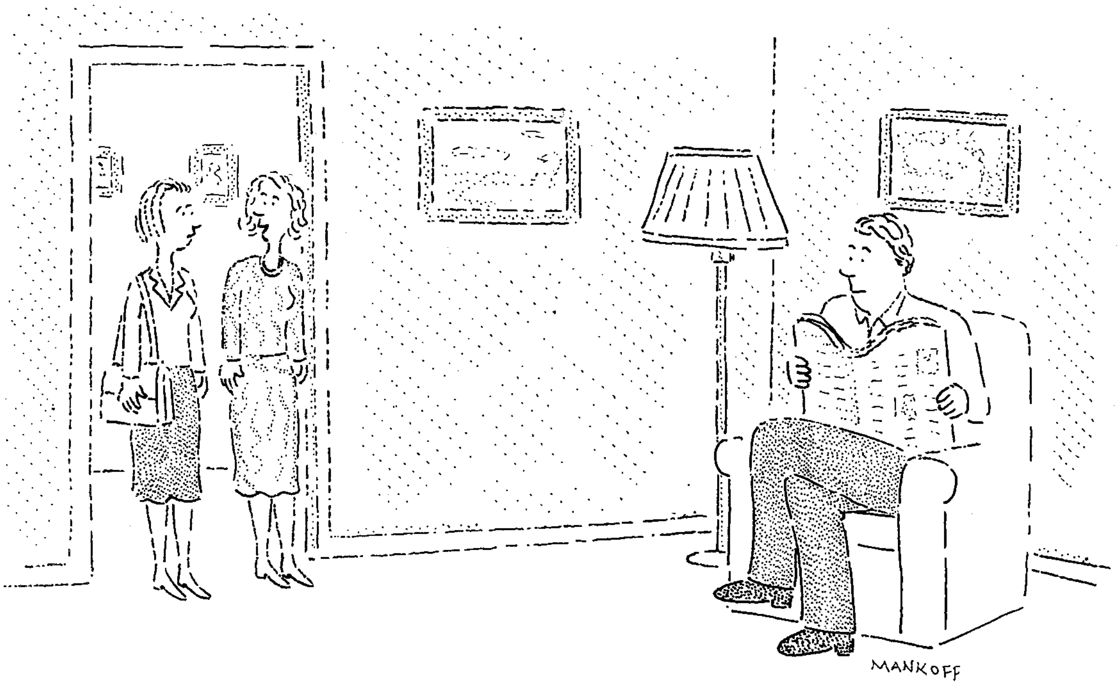
ONE-RING MUD SHOW

Billy Martin, who is the ringmaster of Vidbel's Olde Tyme Circus, a small tent show that plays one-night stands in the Northeast, was giving me a lesson in circus slang. "Souvenirs are called garbage, and the souvenir stand is called the garbage joint," he said. "Anybody who sells anything in the tent is called a butcher. Cotton candy is called candy floss. Lemonade or any other drink is called flukum. Let's see. An extra job you do on the show is called your cherry pie. It's also called your Chinese. If someone asked you 'What's your Chinese?' you might say 'Selling garbage.' "

Billy's voice is deep and resonant, the sort of voice you might hear reading the local news on television, or describing prizes on a game show, or announcing that the aging process can now be reversed with a powdered drink mix that you can sell out of your garage in your spare time. Billy is thirty-three years old, is of average height, has wavy brown hair, and weighs a little bit too much. He is almost always in a good mood. At the time of my slang lesson, he was wearing a heavy sweater and chinos; his ringmaster's red tailcoat was hanging in his house trailer, which was parked fifty yards away. We were sitting on a battered metal bleacher inside the tent (also called the top). The tent had been set up in a scrubby field on the outskirts of a small New Jersey town that was on the outskirts of a slightly larger New Jersey town. The dirt in the ring was the kind of dirt you see in a place where something has been torn down; I could see in it glinting bits of broken glass and aluminum foil. Sitting with us was Billy's wife, Angela, who does a solo trapeze act and assists in another performer's trained-bird act (her Chinese). She is a few years younger than Billy, and she has long brown permed hair. Billy and Angela had just finished rigging her trapeze from a cable strung between the two main poles of the tent. The first show of the day was about two hours away, and nothing much was going on.



"Amazing, eh? Good-looking, dependable, trustworthy, inflatable."

"A performer is called a kinker," Billy continued. "Don't ask me why. Elephants are called bulls, regardless of whether they're males or females, although the trainer on this show calls his elephants cows. Clowns are called joeys. The little tent at the entrance is called the marquee, and the space between the marquee and the top is called the connection. The rest room is called the donnicker. That's d-o-n-n-i-c-k-e-r."

Angela, who had been sitting quietly, suddenly laughed. She said, "Billy, I'm sure he knows what the donnicker is."

"I'll bet he doesn't," Billy said. "It's a circus word."

Angela gave Billy a look. " 'Donnicker' is a circus word?"

"Sure," he said. He turned to me and asked, "Ever heard of it?"

"No," I said.

"You're kidding," Angela said. "I thought everybody used that word."

Like most of the Vidbel performers, Angela has lived around circuses all her life. Her parents were circus musicians (her mother played organ, and her father played drums), and Angela grew up, along with five brothers and sisters, in a succession of house trailers. Billy is unusual in that he didn't appear in his first circus until he was thirteen, and he didn't begin travelling with circuses full time until four years later. As a relative newcomer to the business, he knows that bathrooms aren't called donnickers in "town" (circus slang for any place that isn't a circus).

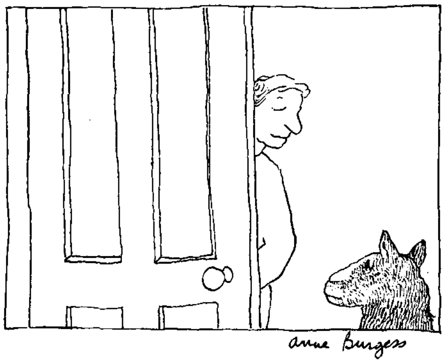
Billy grew up in Olean, New York, about an hour and a half south of Buffalo. His father was an industrial-painting contractor, and his mother was a seamstress. He went to his first circus when he was five or six. "They wanted me to sit up on the elephant to have my picture taken for the newspaper," he recalls. "But I cried and cried and cried, so they took my sister's picture instead. I remember that it rained that day. And I remember walking into the tent. You had to walk up into a semitrailer—that was their marquee—and then down again. And the canvas had a million holes in it, holes all over, and when I looked up—oh, my gosh, it looked like stars."

From that moment, he was hooked. When a circus came to town, he would pretend to be sick, then sneak out of the house and hang around the lot asking hundreds of questions. "For any year you mention," he says, "I can tell you what show was in town, and how the tent was laid, and how many trucks they had, and where the trucks were parked." At noon, he would tell his mother that he had miraculously recovered, and he would return to school, establishing a record of good health to insure that he would be allowed to attend the performance that evening. At every show he attended, he memorized all the acts, including the clowns' gags and the ringmaster's lines. He used bricks to build a ring in his back yard, and he put on circuses with the other children in his neighborhood. When the real circus left town, he went out on his bicycle and salvaged all the souvenirs he could find, including the cardboard arrows that the circus management had used to direct its trucks to the lot. The walls of his bedroom were so deeply buried beneath posters and other memorabilia that his father never had to paint.

At thirteen, Billy got his big break. James M. Cole, who owned a small show that played indoors during the winter, and whom Billy had pestered with questions for several years, invited him to be a guest ringmaster. "My mom made me a little red tailcoat, and when that show was playing in my part of the state I would go," he recalls. "At the beginning of the show, Mr. Cole would announce, 'This young man wants to make the circus his career, so let's give him a big welcome,' and I would come out and say, 'Thank you,' and then I would watch the show in my red coat. Here and there, he would let me introduce an act. It was like a dream come true."

The next year, Billy arranged the booking for a travelling show's ten-day engagement in the Olean area. "My voice changed early," he says, "and I did everything over the phone—calling Chambers of Commerce and Rotary clubs and Fire Departments, and persuading them to buy blocks of tickets—so no one had any idea how young I was, and I set it down like a pro. When I finally met the circus management, on the day the show arrived, and said, 'I'm Billy Martin,' they couldn't believe it." The following summer, through a family connection, he was hired as the ringmaster and record changer for a small travelling show that couldn't afford a band. He liked doing this so much that he took extra courses in high school and graduated a year early. "Everyone always said, 'Oh, it's just a phase he's going through,' but as soon as I had enough credits I left home," he says. His first big job was on a three-ring tent show called Hoxie's Great American Circus. Altogether, he has worked in a dozen circuses, of all sizes, since graduating from high school. He signed up with the Vidbel show in 1989. During the winter, he and Angela perform in several other circuses, including the Cole All-Star Circus, the indoor show on which he got his start. The main difference between then and now is that now Billy owns the show. In 1988, after fifty years in business, James Cole sold out to his most devoted fan and moved to Florida.

VIDBEL'S OLDE TYME CIRCUS is one of three or four dozen itinerant tent circuses in the United States. It is quite small—its much patched nylon top seats only about a thousand people—and its performances have an informal and slightly improvisational feel to them. The young woman who began last year's show by riding horseback into the ring with an American flag held over her head also operated the pony-ride concession on the midway, and she appeared later in the show as the principal performer in a dog-and-pony act called Jennifer and Friends. Three-fifths of the Amazing Roberts, a juggling act, reappeared, in different costumes, as the Acromaniacs, a comic acrobatic act. Two of the Amazing Roberts also worked as prop handlers during the rest of the show, two others ran the garbage joint, and the fifth helped take down the tent at the end of each engagement. The three people who sold balloons also did a chimpanzee act and an aerial act. Multiple talents are a necessity in the circus business nowadays. Getting by on the income from a single act is difficult. Besides, most circuses change their programs significantly from one year to the next, to keep them from seeming overfamiliar to repeat customers, and performers with more than one skill have a better chance of being rehired.



The Vidbel circus was founded in 1984, by Joyce and Al Vidbel. They met in 1950, when both were performers for the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Joyce was a bareback rider, and Al worked with ponies, elephants, and other animals. They don't perform anymore, but they travel with their circus, and their daughter, their son-in-law, and their three granddaughters are part of the troupe. Last year, they were on the road from early May until late September. They put on two hundred and eighty-nine performances in a hundred and twenty-six towns in nine states. Six of those performances took place in July in a manure-flecked cow pasture in Edgartown, Massachusetts, on Martha's Vineyard. My family was staying nearby, and one evening I took my children, who were seven and three, to see one of the shows. On the basis of what they saw, my children decided that they would like to be circus acrobats, and they spent the intermission jumping around while I held on to their hands.

While my children were rehearsing their act, I peeked around the side of the tent. Parked nearby (in a part of the circus lot known to performers as the back yard) were a number of big trucks and house trailers. The trailers belonged to members of the troupe. They looked spooky and mysterious, like Gypsy wagons, and through the lighted windows of some of them I could see people moving around. Lawn chairs had been set up under an awning attached to one of the trailers. Hoses and electric cables snaked everywhere. Various dogs and horses were tethered to various trucks and trailers. Not far from where I was standing, two little boys were playing with a toy dump truck while their parents worked inside the tent. As I watched the boys making dump-truck noises and scooping up chunks of dirt and dried manure, the intermission ended, and we went back to our seats.

A couple of weeks later, back home in Connecticut, I called every circus-related organization I could think of, including the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Clown College, in Venice, Florida, and the Clown Hall of Fame, in Delavan, Wisconsin. No one I talked to knew anything about the Vidbels. Finally, a man in the research department of the Circus World Museum, in Baraboo, Wisconsin, dug up a telephone number. I dialled the number and told the woman who answered the phone that I was having trouble tracking down the Vidbels. With a heavy sigh, she said, "That's the tragedy of it," and then she gave me the telephone number of the show's promoter, a man named Al Meredith. After several phone calls back and forth, he told me that the Vidbels had agreed to let me travel with them for a while. I would join them in September in Seaside Heights, New Jersey, where they would be putting on nine shows over three days, and travel with them until they left New Jersey for Delaware and Maryland and the final performances of their season.

Before I ran off to the circus, I went to a gas station in Stamford, Connecticut, where a young man identified to me as Andy, Jr., rented me a twenty-three-foot Shasta camper. The camper was light beige on the outside and brown on the inside, and it had a kitchen, a bathroom with a miniature tub and shower, beds for five or six people, and an atmosphere consisting primarily of air freshener and heat. I explored it briefly, admiring its many convenient features. Then I went looking for Andy, Jr., whom I found near the gas pumps yelling at one of his teen-age employees. He explained to me why I would be the dumbest person on earth if I ever hired any teen-age employees. Then he showed me how to operate my generator, my toilet, my heater, and my water pump, and I took off.

I've always liked large recreational vehicles, but my pleasure in this one was muted somewhat as I discovered that its stove rattled constantly on the road, its right-hand-turn signal didn't work when the headlights were on, most of its windows apparently couldn't be opened, the doors of its kitchen cabinets banged at every bump, and its steering wheel was slack and unresponsive. I made most of these discoveries almost immediately after setting out, but I was too excited about my trip to go back and discuss them with Andy, Jr. After pulling over briefly to disassemble most of the stove and spread its greasy parts on the brown carpet so that no part was touching any other part, I pulled onto I-95 and headed out.

SEASIDE HEIGHTS is a resort community halfway down the Jersey shore. Its main features are a broad white sand beach, a long boardwalk, hundreds of guest cottages and rooming houses, an enormous, undulating water slide known as the Water Works, and an endless-seeming collection of arcades, amusements, and carnival rides. The economy of Seaside Heights differs from that of most of the rest of the country in that it is based not on buying but on winning. If you drop by Sonny's & Rickey's No Name ("Largest CD Selection on the Boardwalk") and see a compact disk you would like to own, you can't simply fork over the price; you have to put down a dollar and spin a big roulette wheel. In the summer, Seaside Heights is thronged with pale vacationers wearing sandals and black socks, and videotaping their tubby children eating hot dogs, drinking Diet Pepsi, and complaining. At the time of my visit, in late September, the crowds were relatively sparse, but the weather was still warm, and the sky was a deep and unbroken blue.

I saw the Vidbels' red-and-white tent almost immediately. It had been set up in a dusty parking lot a block inland from the boardwalk. The lot was small, and the tent spilled over onto the sidewalks on two sides. On a third side, the tent encroached on the back of someone's house. I turned in to a parking lot directly across the street, gave six dollars to a woman wearing a canvas money pouch, and parked my camper near two house trailers, which I assumed belonged to people connected with the show. Heading across the street, I found the Vidbels' office, a red-and-white trailer that had a door on one side and a ticket window on the other. Sitting just inside the door was a middle-aged woman with flowing white hair, blue eyes, and the smoothest skin I have ever seen on anyone over the age of about seven. She was Joyce Vidbel.

The trailer was filled mainly with old and mismatched pieces of office furniture. There was a battered metal desk, a battered wooden desk, a battered metal storage cabinet, and some

"There ain't any place like it, honey."

–*Blaze Starr*

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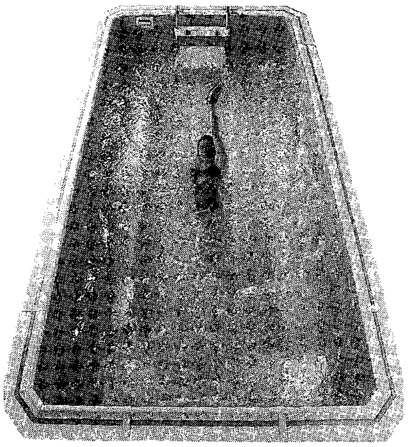

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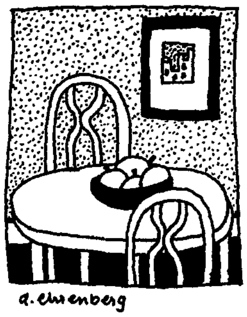
battered office chairs. In a corner at the far end was an odd-shaped, elaborately upholstered greenish-yellow love seat, which gave the impression of having formerly graced the lobby of a hotel that had gone out of business. The walls were covered with circus posters, and the floor was covered with worn red carpeting. I asked Joyce to tell me a little bit about the history of the Olde Tyme Circus.

"It's a new circus," she said. "This is just our eighth year. In our first year, we were out nineteen days. The next year, we had seven weeks. The year after that was twelve weeks, I believe, and it kept growing. This year, we're up to twenty-one weeks."

"Will your season be longer next year?" I asked.

"I hope not," she said. "This is a very rigorous schedule. The tent goes up and down almost every day, with very few layoffs, and moving it is very demanding. Almost every day, we have a different town, a different sponsor, sometimes a different state. We have all these new requirements and regulations to meet, and new problems every time we move. Here we're playing on a dirt lot, which is hard on the tent. When we play on blacktop, though, we have to fill in all the holes we make with our stakes. Every day brings its own problems and conditions to be met, and it's a challenge to iron them all out and do what has to be done, and then move on to the next town."



A clown came to the door of the trailer and asked, "May I leave my mandolin in here?" Joyce said he could. The clown was not part of the circus, which employed just one full-time clown last year, but was connected in some way with Clownfest '91, a clown convention that was taking place in Seaside Heights that weekend. The convention had been organized by a group called the National Clown Arts Council, Inc., which had also sponsored the Vidbels' engagement. The N.C.A.C. is based in Bloomfield, New Jersey, and is the source of the Seven Clown Commandments. The Fourth Clown Commandment is "I will remove my make-up and change into my street clothes as soon as possible following my appearance, so that I can not be associated with any incident, which may be detrimental to the good name of clowning."

Another clown came to the door of the trailer. She said, "They told us we could have our picture taken on one of the elephants."

"You'll have to talk to the trainer about that," Joyce said. The clown left. Joyce watched her as she walked toward the elephant compound, then said, "Ordinarily, our show runs about an hour and forty minutes, and we do two shows a day, but the Clownfest people wanted us to do three one-hour shows instead. We've cut it down to about an hour and fifteen minutes, but you don't want to cut out everything. I don't like cutting, because it makes people who have seen us on the road before think we have a smaller show now. Still, it has been good in a way, because it's meant that everyone can have a little time off. And, of course, we don't have to pack up every night, since we're here for three days. That's very unusual for us. We've had a long season, and everyone is ready for a break."

When the Vidbels are on the road, they live in a large house trailer, which they pull behind a pickup truck. When the trailer is parked, they enlarge it slightly by extending from one of its sides a boxy appendage that slides out like a drawer and is just big enough to hold a good-sized couch. Like most of the other spaces inside the trailer, the space between the bottom of the couch and the floor is crammed with stuff, which makes the couch seem less like a piece of furniture than like the topmost item in a pile. Storage space is always at a premium in a house trailer. This is especially true in the Vidbels' trailer, because it is also the home of two of their granddaughters, Jennifer and Susan, who are sixteen-year-old identical twins. The Vidbels' third granddaughter, Sadie, who is twelve, lives with her mother and her stepfather in a nearby semitrailer whose forward two-thirds has been converted into a living area; the rear third is occupied by the family's eight huskies and four baboons.

A young man came to the door and asked, "May I have a chair for my grandmother? She's having trouble with the bleachers."

"*I* have trouble with the bleachers," Joyce said, and she got up and handed the young man one of four lawn chairs that were leaning against a wall behind her. Then she sat down again.

I asked her about her childhood.

"I was horse-crazy when I was a girl," she said. "I grew up on a farm in Windham, New York, about thirty miles south of Albany. I was so crazy about horses that my parents sent me to a girls' camp out in Nebraska—White Horse Ranch, it was called—where they taught you how to ride and perform and train, and the camp had a little show out on the road, and I went with it. As a result of that, I met someone who was affiliated with the Ringling show, and he gave me a letter of recommendation, and I got a job, working in the big production numbers. I was eighteen years old at the time. When I met Al, he was working a herd of elephants. We got married almost immediately, and then we quit the Ringling show, because we thought we ought to live like normal people. That lasted about three months. 'Normal' turned out not to be right for us. Eventually, we bought one elephant, which led to two, which led to three."

Joyce got up and rummaged around in the metal storage cabinet. She came back with a scrapbook and flipped through the pages.

"That picture there, that's me with the elephants and two of my granddaughters, the twins," she said. "The picture is from the Shrine circus in Maine, I believe. We worked those dates for years. We also worked at the Catskill Game Farm for about seven years. The second day out with this show in 1986, they were taking publicity pictures with one of the elephants in a parking lot in front of a store, and a pickup truck came in and just nipped the elephant. The elephant turned quickly, and when she did she knocked Al into the pickup truck. The truck opened his head from his eyebrow to the back of his neck, and he went down. Then the driver of the truck decided he ought to get out of there, and he backed up over Al. When I got there, the elephant had her trunk behind him, and she was trying to get him up on his feet. That's the way they pick up a baby elephant when it sits down. Al had sixteen broken ribs, a broken collarbone, a collapsed lung, a punctured lung, a cracked pelvis, and I don't remember what else, and his jaw was broken in four places. They didn't think he was going to make it. But four weeks later he was back on the show. We call him the walking miracle."

Joyce turned the page and showed me a picture of Al in the hospital. His face was the color of an eggplant, and it was crisscrossed with stitches. Joyce looked at the picture for a long time, and then she looked at me. In a quiet voice, she said, "Circus people like to say that you get sawdust in your shoes. The circus just becomes a part of you. It's a whole society here, a community. Circus performers are a breed unto themselves. They are very close-knit, and they don't generally mix with what we call town people. It's not an easy life. There's no security in it. You're subject to the weather and the whim of the sponsor, and everything we do takes a lot of faith. Every day, we're stepping out and walking in faith, you know? And some days it's chicken and some days it's feathers. But the amazing thing about it is that most of the people who get involved in it for any period of time end up committed to it, to the point where they really don't want to do anything else."

THE 11 A.M. show had been going on for about half an hour when I made my way into the tent. The air inside was five or ten degrees warmer than the air outside, which was warm to begin with. Sunlight streaming through the red-and-white nylon gave everyone a rosy glow of circusy good health. On the top of the tent I could see the shadows of seagulls circling above the midway, searching the ground for pieces of hot dog.

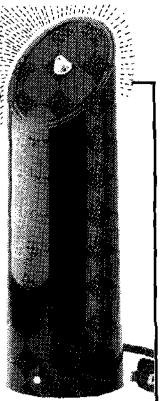
Last year, the Vidbels employed about two dozen performers. The acts in the full show included the Amazing Roberts, who juggled balls, duckpins, rings, tennis racquets, and torches; a trained-baboon act, led by the Vidbels' daughter, Sharon, and her husband, Jack Burke, who works during the off-season as a truck driver; the Acromaniacs, who did stunts involving tumbling mats, a folding chair, and a large table whose top had been reinforced with several thicknesses of plywood; Sharon's Alaskans, a trained-dog act, led by Sharon Burke with help from her daughter Sadie; Angela Martin's trapeze act; another aerial act, featuring four members of a family named Bannister, who also have an act featuring a bicycle-riding chimpanzee; a safecracking routine and several other gags, performed by Mike Snyder, the circus's clown; a bareback-riding act; a trained-bird act, led by the Vidbels' granddaughter Susan; a dog-and-pony act, led by the Vidbels' granddaughter Jennifer; and an act featuring three female Asian elephants, which was led by a Texan named Bucky Steele. (The Vidbels sold their own elephants a few weeks after Al's accident.)

As I found a seat, Billy Martin stepped into the ring and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, it is our pride and pleasure to present bareback-riding excellence and equestrian ability. Introducing the world-renowned Suarez-Loyal-Repenski troupe!"

The band—a single musician with a drum kit and an electronic synthesizer that was controlled by an Apple Macintosh computer—began to play, and three enormous horses entered the ring. I remembered this act clearly from Martha's Vineyard. It features four members of a family named Suarez and a young man named Timi Loyal. (Timi's wife, Denise, had also been in the act until about a week before, when her horse fell and kicked her in one knee.) The Suarezes are from Mexico. Enrique and Rosa, who are in their late fifties, do little in the act except provide moral support, but both were once featured performers with Ringling Brothers. Enrique was a well-known bareback rider, and Rosa was an aerialist who was famous for hanging by her hair from a flying trapeze. They have four children, of whom the two younger ones—sixteen-year-old Maggie and twelve-year-old Rickey—are in the act. The older children, both girls, also work in circuses, one in Canada and one in Pennsylvania. The Suarez children represent the fifth generation of their family in the business.

Timi Loyal, the fifth member of the troupe, is in his early thirties and is an eighth-generation performer. His father is Justino Loyal, who was an international riding star in the thirties, forties, and fifties. Timi and Enrique hooked up about ten years ago.

Enrique's younger children turned out to be talented riders, and Rickey and Timi work well together. Both are so light on their feet that when they stand on the backs of their horses they seem almost to hover above them. The highlight of the act is a standing backflip that Timi does from one galloping



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horse to another. (His father was famous for doing "first to fourth" backflips—four backward somersaults, from the first to the last galloping horse in a line of four.) Rickey still works with a safety line, but most people—including Timi—expect him to surpass Timi someday. When he stands on Timi's shoulders, lifts his arms above his head, and beams at the crowd, he looks as unruffled as if he were rolling past on a skateboard instead of standing on the shoulders of a man standing on the back of a swiftly moving horse. Then he takes Timi's hands and does a forward somersault to a standing position in front of Timi.

After a ten-minute intermission, the show resumed with Jennifer's dog-and-pony act. Jennifer and her twin sister have long blond hair and are solidly built. When they were little, they performed in their grandfather's elephant act. They would climb onto the front legs of a squatting elephant, and the elephant would rise up on its hind legs and lift them into the air. Joyce wishes that the girls were still interested in performing together, because identical twins have a lot of audience appeal, but the two have developed separate pursuits. I seldom even saw them in the tent at the same time.

When Jennifer's act was finished, the Bannisters entered the ring carrying balloons, and Billy's voice boomed over the public-address system. "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls!" he said. "Look who's coming into the Big Top. By golly, it's our balloon people—our balloon brigade! And just *look* at those great big beautiful bouquets of multicolored, almost indestructible circus souvenir balloons!"

Billy's balloon spiel is one of his highest achievements as a ringmaster. It is designed to promote a state of agitated acquisitiveness in the audience. The balloons are perfectly ordinary, and are filled with plain old air rather than with helium, but Billy manages to make them seem rare and interesting. He also conveys a powerful sense that their purchase is mandatory.

"Down through the ages," he continued, "the balloon on a stick always has been—and it always will be—the official, the *traditional*, circus souvenir. Friends, right now, as you can see, we are taking just a moment to prepare for our next exciting presentation to come. With your kind permission, though, we are going to declare these next few short minutes balloon time here at the Big Top. And that simply means this: Anyone who would care to purchase one of these jumbo souvenir balloons, now is the time to pick out your favorite color, get up, leave your seat, and hurry on over to the vender nearest you. Now, folks, the balloons sell for just one dollar, and since this is a special, *time-limited* offer, please have the correct change ready. Now, we have a limited supply, a limited amount of time—so what are you waiting for? On your mark, get set, *go!*"

THE DEAD

They were white like the stones in the meadow
The sheep lick.
White stones like children in Sunday dress
Playing bride and groom.

We found a clockface with Roman numerals
In the old man's overcoat pocket.
It was time for a bit of rain to fall.
He looked at the sky without recognizing it.

Your hands, Mother, which made the old man disappear,
The Lord who saw over them.
His martyrs, pierced by arrows, have their eyes open.

"I put out the light so their eyes won't find me," you said.
O dreams like shirttails vanishing in a windswept meadow,
And your hands like white mice, Mother.

—CHARLES SIMIC

• •

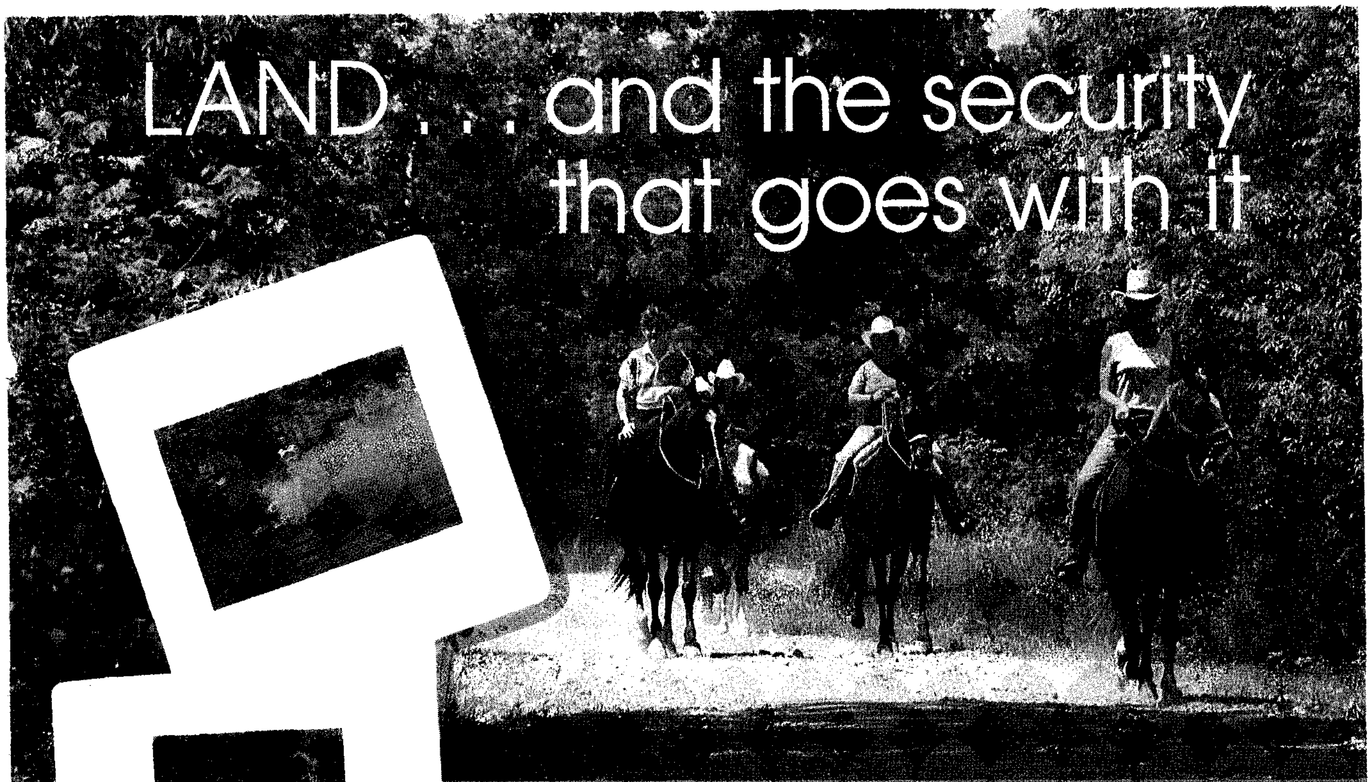
Billy told me one day that he had picked up quite a few of his ringmastering skills by studying Bob Barker, the game-show host. Barker, he said, has a talent for padding out a monologue with little phrases and expressions that serve no purpose except to fill dead air. "It's all timing," Billy said. "Barker just keeps talking, not saying anything: 'Right—this—way—please. Here—you—go. Very—good.' When he asks someone to come over to him, he doesn't make them walk over in silence." Billy did the same thing in the ring while the balloons were being sold. He urged people to hurry. He announced that time was running out. He stressed that there would not be another opportunity to buy. He said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we have about a minute remaining in this special offer—approximately one minute remaining in this special balloon sales campaign." The things he said were intended to keep the tent from filling with a paralyzing silence that would glue people to their seats and prevent them from bounding down to the ring and thrusting currency at the balloon venders. That was important, because the sale of things like balloons, hot dogs, and cotton candy can make or break a small circus.

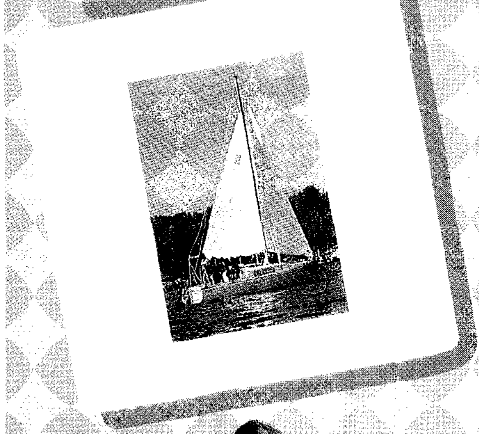
Billy watched the action from his position near the bandstand. Just as the last balloons were being snapped up, he announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys, I am afraid that we are going to conclude all balloon sales at this time. We would like to say, on behalf of everyone who has participated in this special balloon sales offer, we thank you for your attention, and, above all, we thank you for your patronage."

The balloon venders, now empty-handed, left the tent. People began to return to their seats. Some were holding dollar bills. Momentary indecision had cost them an opportunity to participate in a time-limited balloon-sales campaign—that was approximately what they were thinking. And now their children would be the only children in the tent unable to obstruct the vision of people sitting behind them for the remainder of the show.

Billy let everyone get settled again. "Ladies and gentlemen, please listen carefully," he said. "I see that a lot of you folks would still like to purchase a balloon. Well, I have just received a special communiqué, and I am happy to say that our venders are now busy selecting more of your favorite color, blowing up more balloons, and, of

LAND . . . and the security that goes with it





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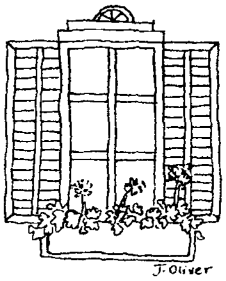
LIVING in a camper in a parking lot in Seaside Heights, New Jersey, made me hungry in a particular way, so one afternoon I walked to a nearby convenience store and bought Coca-Cola, M&M's, Doritos, Rollos, coffee ice cream, mesquite-flavored potato chips, and a copy of *People*. I carried my groceries back to my camper, and put the ice cream in my freezer. While drinking a Coke, I walked back and forth on my brown carpeting and ate almost all the potato chips. Then I sat in my chair, read *People*, and ate all the Rollos. Then I headed over to the boardwalk.

Quite a few of the people walking on the boardwalk were clowns. At one corner, I saw a man in a clown suit pushing a baby in a stroller. The baby was wearing a little clown hat. Farther along, I saw an entire clown family: a clown mom, a hobo-clown dad, and two clown children. I saw a man wearing a clown nose and shouting "Clown noses! One dollar!" I met a clown named Happy Go Litely, who was a participant in Clownfest. He had red hair and was wearing white gloves that had no fingertips. He was also wearing enormous white-and-blue shoes with white crosses on the toes. He said, "I'm here because we do clown ministry full time. Professional clowning is good, and we are professional quality, and we come here every year to train and equip people who do church ministries. There are thousands of clown ministers. It's really a fast-growing thing. We use object lessons and illusions and whatever else, and we just share the importance of the love of God and the good news of Jesus Christ." (When Happy Go Litely performs a clown church service, he likes to say such things as "If you're glad that God has promised us, just like the butterfly, a new hope, a new beginning, and a second chance, give Him a great big hand of appreciation right now, won't you?") Clowns were so numerous on the boardwalk that they seemed to constitute an ethnic group. That impression was reinforced by the appearance of the boardwalk itself: with its ski lift, Frog Bog, and rooftop miniature golf course, it looked like a clown homeland.



When I first got to Seaside Heights, I had assumed that the Vidbel performers and the Clownfest clowns would have a lot in common. But they did not. Very few of the Clownfest clowns had ever had anything to do with a circus. Some were ministers. Some were retired people whose hobby was wearing funny clothes and going to conventions. Some performed at birthday parties or marched in Shrine parades. Only a very small handful had ever gone on the road with a tent show. In the view of most of the people connected with the Vidbel circus, clowning as it was practiced by most of the Clownfest clowns was just another town job.

I bought a chocolate-yogurt cone and wandered back to the office trailer. I found Ruth Owen working the ticket window. Ruth is a cheerful, friendly woman in her sixties, with straight brown hair and glasses. I sat down in one of the office chairs and asked her how long she had been connected with circuses.

"I've been in circuses all my life," she said. "I used to be a performer. I did bareback riding, juggling, and a lot of other things. I was born in this business. My mother was from Germany, and Mr. Barnum brought her family over when she was very young, and then she was still with Ringling when they merged. She was what is called a contortionist—one of these people who bend over and look like a pretzel, you know? I was never that limber. They tried for years to teach me to do a backbend, but I could never get over."

A woman came to the window and asked for two tickets. "Ten dollars, please," Ruth said. "The show is at four-thirty, Ma'am. Yes, Ma'am. Thank you."

She went on, "Mr. Vidbel has known my family for something like fifty-five years, and I've known him for as long as I can remember. Three years ago, the Vidbels called my husband and asked him to come on the show, and I told him to do it, because the Vidbels are good people, and their show is a good show."

A young man with a crying child in his arms came to the window to ask for a refund. His daughter, he said, had decided that she didn't want to go into the big tent after all. Ruth took his tickets and handed him back his money.

A man came to the window and asked for three tickets. "That's fifteen dollars, sir," Ruth said. The man handed her a twenty-dollar bill. She put it on the counter in front of her and set a little ceramic elephant on top of it while she made change and counted out the tickets.

"John is my second husband," Ruth said. "I met him when he joined a circus that I was on. I was running one of the concessions, selling drinks and hamburgers and hot dogs, and he came on as a cook. A couple of years later, we got married. John is one of these people who ran away to join the circus. I think he was in his twenties when he did it, and he's been with it ever since, although we did try to settle down like ordinary people at one point. Just about everybody in the circus does that at some point, but they almost always go back. We lived in Florida for a little while, and in Connecticut, and Georgia, and John got into the construction business, and I usually worked as a cashier in a building-supply store or a craft store, or something like that. But it got to where we couldn't stand it anymore, and we came back out.

"When we aren't on the road, we live just east of Cincinnati, in a small town called Goshen. It's just a crossroads, but we go there when the show closes. This year, though, we won't be going to Ohio until the end of January, because we're going to the Big Apple Circus as soon as we close down here. I'm going to work in an information booth, and John is going to be in charge of the diesel heaters, which keep the place warm in the winter. We'll just park our trailer right there in Lincoln Center, and live the way we do here. After we finish there, we'll go to Goshen until April. Then we'll head back to winter quarters in Windham and begin to get this show ready again to go on the road for the new season."

THE way circus people talk provides informal confirmation of the theory of relativity. Time and space are blended together in a performer's mind, and the terms that describe them are interchangeable. A town, for example, is often referred to as a "date," as in "I blew out my generator at a date in Massachusetts last year." Similarly, time is frequently described in geographical terms. Timi Loyal told me, "My wife hurt her knee four towns ago, and she hasn't been in the act since then." On a travelling circus, nearly every day has a different locale, and nearly every place is connected to a particular time. The difference between a season and its setting is blurred.

Travelling from one date to another is called "making the jump." The Vidbels' jumps average between fifty and a hundred miles; some circuses make jumps of several hundred miles. Every afternoon, before the final show, Joyce or Ruth would sit down with a map in the office trailer, write out directions for that night's route on small scraps of paper, then hand them out to the various drivers. Some people leave almost the moment the last show ends. Some, including those whose Chinese is helping to knock down the tent, set out at ten or eleven, or whenever the show has finally been loaded onto the trucks. Others, including Billy and Angela, usually spend the night at the old lot and make the jump the following morning, after getting a good night's sleep. On the jumps that I made, around southern New Jersey, I preferred travelling at night. I liked the feeling of being part of a secret convoy dispersed through the countryside. I liked stopping at a little gas station in the middle of nowhere to refuel my camper and five minutes later seeing the elephant trailer go by. And I liked waking up in a place I had never seen before. At one date, for example, I didn't realize until the following morning that I had parked beside a lake.

The hardest part of jumping is moving the tent. The Vidbels' tent measures eighty feet by a hundred and twenty. It is known in the tent trade as "an eighty with a forty"; that is, it is eighty feet wide and has a forty-foot "middle." The middle is the space between the center poles, and its size determines, among other things, the maximum possible size of the ring. The Vidbels' ring is made of eleven curved plywood sections whose tops are covered with mangy red carpet, and it has an inside diameter of thirty-eight feet. Larger circuses often have larger rings. The Suarez-Loyal-Repenski troupe spent the 1989 season with the Big Apple Circus, whose ring is about forty feet. When the troupe joined the Vidbels, in 1991, Timi Loyal had to adjust his timing, because the horses were now taking fewer steps in each trip around the ring, and were leaning more severely toward the center. If he had made his horse-to-horse backflip the way he was accustomed to making it, he would have landed just in front of the first row of seats. Becoming comfortable with the new layout took him several days.

Raising the tent takes two or three hours; knocking it down takes about half as long. The length of either job depends on the quality of the tent crew, which is highly variable. During the main part of the season, the crew consists of ten or twelve workers, most of whom are drifters and many of whom wander off after a week or so, having found circus life too difficult or too boring. Members of the crew live in their own trailers or campers, or cars or pickup trucks. At the time of my visit, the crew was very small, because Joyce had allowed it to dwindle through attrition as the season neared its end. In addition to members of the regular troupe who worked on the tent in order to earn extra money, the crew consisted of a brother of the musician, who had signed on for about a week, and two women in their twenties, who would be returning to similar jobs on the Big Apple Circus as soon as the Vidbels' season ended. The women were named Alexandra and Nancy. Alexandra had grown up with circuses; Nancy had joined her first circus after running away from home with a young man who worked on one. Nancy had a big black tattoo of a skull on the inside of her right leg, just above the ankle. She and Alexandra were living in sleeping bags in the covered back of a red pickup truck.

"Working on the circus is interesting," Alexandra told me one day while she and Nancy were waiting for the last show to end. "You get to travel, and you learn a lot about survival, and you learn things about working with other people that you don't learn easily in other jobs, like how to get along with people day after day, in hard times and good times. It's fun, though. How good the money is depends on what your goals are. You've got your

Deborah Digges

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"Told with clarity and grace ...If [this] is the story of one woman's life, it is also the story of how that life reflects the larger story: the nation's passage from post-war optimism through the disenchantment of Vietnam and the 1960s, into the unsettled, uncertain climate of today." —Jonathan Yardley, Washington Post Book World

"Alluring...and gracefully written" —Gail Caldwell, Boston Globe

Published by Knopf

Photo: Joyce Ravid

living covered. All you have to pay for, really, is your good times and your food, and maybe some nice clothes, or whatever. Plus, there are other ways to make money on a show. Some people will make clothes, or they'll do massages on the side—there are lots of ways. It's like a little city that travels, you know? It's like a microcosm of the real world."

A moment later, the show was over, and Alexandra and Nancy went off to begin pulling up tent stakes.

THE most popular act in the Vidbel show was the elephant act, which always ended each performance. Billy Martin would say, "And now, in our circus ring, here they come, everybody's favorite—ponderous performing pachyderms! Hold on to your horses, everyone! Here come the elephants!" A prop man would then pull back the flap of the tent, and into the ring would come three briskly moving elephants, followed by a man in a safari suit. The man was Bucky Steele, their trainer and owner. He would lead his animals through a crisp, complex routine that involved standing on tubs, rising on hind legs, standing on front legs, spinning in circles, and weaving in and out. I liked watching the elephants. Bucky guided them with gestures and quiet spoken commands, and when they walked, the ground literally shook.

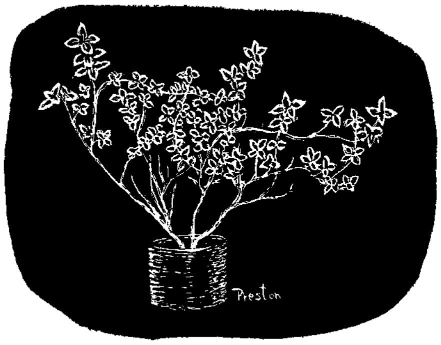
When he isn't wearing his safari suit, Bucky Steele reminds me of Chuck Yeager, the famous test pilot. Bucky's skin resembles hide, and his eyes gleam with the opposite of foolishness. His voice has a gritty Texas twang. He is in his fifties, and his hair is mostly gray, and a fair number of his teeth are missing. If he were my father, the thought of having to deal with him afterward would make me reluctant to spend Halloween pushing over headstones in a cemetery, for example. Early one afternoon, I found him sitting in a lawn chair inside the elephant compound, a roped-off area on the midway. The elephants were standing in front of their trailer, eating hay. Bucky's wife, Bonnie, had warned me not to enter the compound without a clear signal from Bucky, so I stood around waiting for him to notice me. Finally, he did, and I stepped over the rope and took a seat beside him.

"When I tell people not to get too close to the elephants, they'll sometimes ask me why," he said. "Well, I tell them, the reason is that with elephants you never know. They're wild animals, and they're big and strong, and they're liable to hurt someone. And then the people will say, 'Oh, why is that? Have you been mean to them?' It's just ridiculous. Humanity is so stupid sometimes. I hate it when people call elephants 'gentle giants.' They're anything but gentle."

"Have you ever been injured?" I asked.

"Well, I've been slapped around a little," he said. "But only through my own damn stupidity. It makes me feel very inferior, because I know that if I had been a better trainer it wouldn't have happened. I'll tell you one thing, though: I feel a lot safer around a herd of elephants than I do in a damn airplane, or in a taxicab in downtown New York. But you have to know what the hell you're doing when you work with elephants. I've been in circuses all my life, and I know of no one who has ever been killed in an arena with lions and tigers. Not one. But elephants have taken a lot. Up until 1930 or so, I'll bet close to thirty per cent of elephant men were killed by their own animals. The main reason is that back in those days there were a lot of male elephants in circuses. The males are big and aggressive, and they had to be exhibited in chains and hobbles, and that mesmerized the public. It was a good drawing card. But when a male elephant comes into musth, which generally runs from early October until the end of January, he doesn't even know his own name. All he wants to do is fight anything that moves. So a lot of people got killed."

Gruesome stories from the old days are common. In 1901, for example, a performing bull called Big Charlie grabbed his trainer with his trunk and threw him into Indiana's Mississinewa River, where the trainer had taken him to drink. When the trainer picked himself up, the elephant caught him again, pushed him under the water, and pinned him to the bottom of the river. The two had worked together for many years. The trainer drowned, and Big Charlie was later killed by circus personnel.



"It's a lot different nowadays," Bucky said. "You don't find many performing bulls anymore, and you don't find many elephants on the road who don't have the temperament for it. If a fire engine goes by, these girls of mine just want to look. But you've still got to respect the intelligence and power of these animals. People will say, 'Gosh, if they're that dangerous, why do you give rides to kids and let them work in the circus?' Well, they're trained, and taught to tolerate it. They do their job, but once their job is over they deserve to be left alone. God, give them a break."

Bucky's parents worked with horses during their circus days, but from a very early age Bucky found that he preferred elephants, and he would spend most of his time hanging around the elephant compound of whatever show his parents happened to be connected with. Over the years, he has worked with baboons, giraffes, hippopotamuses, horses, bears, and other animals, but he has always come back to elephants; he calls them his "habit." Bonnie, who is a good bit younger than Bucky, also has elephants in her background: when she and Bucky met, she was working in the elephant act of one of his friends. Bucky and Bonnie have a twelve-year-old daughter and a six-year-old son. Bucky also has two older children from a previous marriage. Both are in their early thirties: his older son is a circus performer who works with trained bears, and his older daughter is a medical student at Baylor University. "She comes out on the road and helps every once in a while," Bucky told me. "I always hoped she'd be either a veterinarian or a brain surgeon. That way, she'd be able to work on either them or me."

Like most circus-animal trainers, Bucky receives a fair number of comments and complaints from people who believe that having an animal perform in a circus constitutes animal abuse. Just the day before, a woman who said she was affiliated with the Humane Society had complained to Bucky that he was permitting his dog (who usually sleeps under the elephant trailer) to get too close to the elephants' manure. This comment had both amused and rankled him—amused him because he figured that elephant manure was exactly the kind of thing his dog would enjoy being close to, and rankled him because he believes that many animal-rights activists don't know what they're talking about.

"You know, I don't have to make any living doing this," he told me, "but because I do, it makes it possible for the animal and me to work together for the betterment of both, and that's what I always thought we were both created for. There are probably somewhere between thirty and fifty thousand Asian elephants left in the world. They don't really have a natural habitat anymore, and if they're going to survive as a species it's going to be with our help. You can't raise them in captivity and send them back to the wild. If they're going to survive, it will be in captive herds, like the buffalo. We're going to have to go on producing them in captivity and keeping them in captivity for future generations to see, or there aren't going to be any. A lot of these animal-rights eccentrics would say they'd be better off dead. Well, the good Lord didn't create them to be dead. He sent me and a few other people down here, and he told us to get our ass to work and take care of them."

There are animal acts that make me uncomfortable. The Bannisters' chimpanzee act is one of them. In it, a chimpanzee wearing clothes and a dog leash rides a bike and does most of the other things that chimpanzees in circuses do. The chimpanzee doesn't look particularly pleased about any of it, and the act itself seems degrading, in a way that the elephants' act does not. What is supposedly funny about the chimpanzee's act is the fact that here is an animal dressed as a human being and doing things that human beings do. The elephants, in contrast, look like elephants, and although they are performing stunts devised by a human being and intended for human enjoyment, the main impression created by their performance is of their enormous intelligence. In addition, I accept Bucky's rationalization that a few months of performing every year is a reasonable price for an elephant to pay for a decent existence under difficult circumstances. If the alternative were an unfettered life in the wild, I would feel differently. But it's not. Bucky's elephants do spend a fair amount of time travelling in a trailer each year, but they are not subject to poaching or herd culling, they always have plenty to eat, and they are content enough with their situation to breed at something like the natural rate.

Bucky feels very strongly about all this. "At home, the elephants eat before we eat, and their schedule is more important than our schedule," he told me. "Twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year, either my wife or I, one of us, personally, is right there with the elephants. We never leave them. They expect it, they need it, they deserve it, and that's the way we look at it. Now, there are times when I've got to work when I'm not comfortable, or when I've had a long, hard trip, or something, and it's the same with the elephants. I'm not kidding anybody. It's hard on them, too, sometimes. But, hell, we ain't dead yet. We're happy, and they're fat and sassy and in good shape. Jeez, we're all just doing something that keeps us out of trouble."

IT took two or three days for me to get used to the generators. The loudest was the show's big diesel, which powered the concession stand, the lights and the public-address system in the tent, the midway lights, and the lights and appliances in many of the trailers. It was housed in its own semitrailer, and it was so loud that you had to raise your voice in order to be heard if you were anywhere near it. Then, there were the small gasoline generators. Everyone had at least one of those. My camper had one. I had to fire it up whenever I wanted to turn on my lights or operate my laptop computer. The big diesel generator shut down for long periods every day, but somebody's little generator was always running, even in the middle of the night. The noise kept me awake at first, but after a couple of days I almost got to like it. Waking up at six to the sound of Bucky's or Timi's generator gave me a kind of homey feeling, like waking up to the smell of bacon frying in the kitchen. Well, sort of, anyway.

I was always careful to park my camper on the edge of the back yard, so as not to seem presumptuous. Even though the trailers moved every day, the back yard was an established neighborhood. One day, John Owen asked

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me about my job. I said, "I do the opposite of what you do: I work at home." He said, "I work at home, too. My home just moves around." The people on the show don't refer to one another's trailers as trailers; they call them houses. If you are going over to see Enrique Suarez in his trailer, you say, "I'm going over to Enrique's house." In order to maintain a feeling of privacy, circus performers, like people who live in apartment buildings, contract their sense of distance. Angela might go all day without seeing Joyce and Al, even though the Martins' and the Vidbels' trailers were parked just a few feet apart.

One of the most difficult aspects of circus life is the constricted scope of personal relationships. I have single friends who live in New York City and complain that they never meet anybody, but if you travel with a circus you *really* never meet anybody. During the time that I was with the Vidbels, I noticed that David Lange (one of the Amazing Roberts) and Maggie Suarez were spending a lot of time together; late one night, I saw them holding hands and watching the trailers arrange themselves in a new lot. It was as though the only boy in the senior class had fallen in love with the only girl. One reason circus people marry circus people is that they don't know anybody else. In fact, most of the circus people I met had married within their specialties: the Vidbels had both performed with animals, the Steeles had both been involved with elephants, the Owens had met while working concessions.

Circus life is especially hard on children. Parents tend to be occupied elsewhere: if they aren't performing or packing up, they are heading off to do laundry or buy groceries—chores that can consume entire mornings if the circus lot is isolated, as it often is. Whether or not a child has a playmate for the season depends on the show's lineup. Despite the six-year gap between their ages, the Steeles' children spent most of their playtime together, because they didn't have much choice. The isolation extends into the off-season as well, since circus children are seldom enrolled in regular schools and thus have a limited pool of friends even when they aren't on the road. (The Steeles' children and the Vidbels' grandchildren all take correspondence courses offered by the Calvert School, of Baltimore. Calvert's other clients include children of missionaries and people who live in isolated religious communities.) They also miss out on the social side of school, and on extracurricular activities. Eddie Brown, who had run away from home to join the circus at fifteen, and now, in his twenties, was working in the Vidbels' concession tent, told me that he regretted having never been a Boy Scout or a high-school football player. He also said that his brother John, another member of the crew, travelled without his wife and children, because they hated life on the road. "His wife grew up in a circus, too, but the kids were driving her crazy, you know," Eddie said. "Every day, there they were, just hanging around the trailer all day. This life is no good for kids. They don't get to live out here."

Despite any regrets he may have, Eddie still finds circus life irresistible. He told me that he doesn't like being at home, because all he does is sit around thinking about what's happening out on the road. There's something deeply seductive about pulling up stakes every night and moving your entire life fifty or a hundred miles away. I never bought a newspaper while I was with the Vidbels, in part because the world beyond the circus lot seemed hopelessly remote. Wars and airline bankruptcies are town problems; on a circus lot, they are far less vivid than the daily challenge of putting up and taking down the tent. I found that isolation quite soothing, and I came to love the early hours of the afternoon, between the raising of the tent and the beginning of the first show. Several members of the troupe would slip off to do their laundry or empty their holding tanks; others would stick around the lot to groom their animals or clean up their trailers. I would fire up my generator and read a book or tap away on my little computer. When I got bored, I would poke around the lot or drop by the office trailer and see if anything was going on.

In a light rain one afternoon, on a nice lot near Raritan, I walked over to the office trailer and sat for a while with Ruth and Joyce. Ruth was writing out directions for that night's jump; Joyce was watching the rain and waiting for showtime. She showed me a pair of photographs hanging on the trailer's wall. "Those two people there are Connie and Dime Wilson," she said. "They were clowns, and they started in Shrine circuses, and they raised six children on the road. Mrs. Bannister, who has the chimp act on our show, is one of those children. I was always in awe of Connie and Dime, because they always seemed calm and happy, which is quite an accomplishment if you're bringing up six kids in a trailer. She also made all her own wardrobe—and she was a *clown*—and all the girls were excellent seamstresses. Connie and Dime were always on time for work, and the kids all worked well, and, in fact, all but two of the children are still in the business."

Dime's health began to fail in the late eighties, Joyce said. In 1990, he decided that he wanted to return to performing, and, against her better judgment, Joyce hired him for the season. "I told him, 'Performing is difficult and stressful, and if you're not well you won't be able to heal,' but he had made up his mind, and he and Connie came on the show." When the season got under way, Joyce watched nervously as Dime's health deteriorated steadily from one date to the next. Finally, one of his children intervened, and Dime agreed to go to a hospital and then to return to Florida. A short time later, he died.

"It was very difficult," Joyce said, "but afterward I felt glad that I had allowed him to come on the show, because he got to do what he really wanted to do toward the end. Al and I went down to see him in Florida just before he passed away, and I could tell that he knew he was not going to live. He may have known it all along. He wanted one last time in the ring, you know? It probably shortened his life, but the circus was all that mattered to him."

DURING performances, my favorite place to be was just outside the performers' entrance to the tent, known as the back door. I enjoyed chatting with the performers as they waited to go on, and watching Robert Lange (another of the Amazing Roberts) practice his juggling, and seeing Billy stick his head out through the flap and ask Angela, who was on her way back to their trailer after her act, to put on a pot of coffee. One day, I

OH, MR. WICKERSHAM, I'VE FOUND ANOTHER ONE.
GEE, SHE'S CUTE AND FUN AND A VERY CHEAP DATE.
CBarsotti

was even recruited to hold one of Sharon's trained dogs until she needed it in her act.

Another habitué of the back door was Al Meredith, the show's promoter. When I first talked to Al, on the phone, I had pictured him as a circus promoter in the classic mold: bald head, round belly, gold teeth, big cigar. In person, though, he seemed less like a sucker-hungry huckster than like a retired college professor—which, as it turns out, is what he is.

"This is my twenty-fourth year of booking shows," he told me one evening as we leaned against the ropes. "During most of those years, I was on the faculty at Rutgers. I taught marketing and economics there for thirty-three years, and before that I spent a few years working at Quaker Oats. Very few people at the university knew about my involvement in circuses, and I tried really hard to keep the two activities separate. I've been retired from teaching for three or four years. I really do more marketing now than I did then, I think. It's not all that sophisticated, but it's real, basic marketing. Even so, these things can sort of defy explanation. For example, everyone is talking about how lousy the economy is in Massachusetts, but we went up there and had a very successful tour. You tell me why it happened."

Al is sixty-six. He and his wife live on the New Jersey coast, within fairly easy driving distance of most of the Vidbels' New Jersey dates. His circus lineage goes back to his father, who as a young man worked on a circus that moved from town to town by train. Al's father travelled in a single train car that went along the same route about two weeks ahead of the circus. His job was to put up posters and notify the newspapers, and he moved to a different town every day. By the time Al was born, though, his father had settled down and become a schoolteacher.

"I'm like my father in the sense that my interest has always been with the front end of the business, rather than with what goes on in the tent," Al told me. "I like the performances, but I don't dote on the performers, and there was a period in my life when I probably wouldn't have walked across the street to look at a circus. But the business part of it really fascinates me. When I was first approached about working with Joyce, I was very skeptical, because, to be honest, she had no reputation. Nobody knew anything about her. But the show has built up very quickly. Most circus people would say that Joyce's show is too good for its size. She has some Ringling-calibre acts, and that's unusual in a small show. A good show costs a lot to put on, and to make any money at all in this business you have to keep your expenses down. But the quality of the show has certainly opened up a lot of opportunities. I have a big stack of inquiries about next year that I still have to respond to."

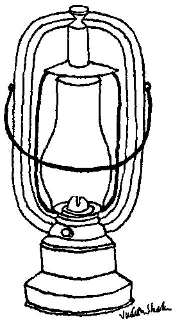
One evening, I was joined at the back door by Henry Bush, a familiar figure in the Vidbels' back yard. Henry is a circus buff. He lives in Newburgh, New York, and he doesn't mind driving all day if it means he can take in another show. Every year, he told me, he puts roughly fifty thousand miles on his car. He figured that this was at least his fifteenth visit to the Vidbels in 1991.

Henry is in his late sixties, and is single. He has small eyes and powerful eyeglasses, and he is strikingly rounded in appearance. Until he retired, a couple of years ago, he worked in the package-printing department of Nabisco. "I used to work nights, from twelve to eight, and then go circusing all day, or I would work from eight to four and go to the circus in the evening," he said. "Every two or three years, I get a new car, always a Chevrolet, and I have never had a problem with any of them. I turn them in at a hundred thousand, a hundred and forty-seven thousand miles. I never got married, because I was travelling so much. The main thing for me is live entertainment, and especially circuses. Country-and-Western shows, too, and stage musicals, and operas, and concert music, but circuses are No. 1. You can't read a book, you can't see a movie, you can't watch TV unless somebody has classified it and censored it and said whether it's good, bad, or otherwise. But the circus in America has never been censored—not even when George Washington went to one in Philadelphia years and years ago. It's family entertainment. I used to exchange Christmas cards with Jimmy Durante, because he was interested in the circus. People used to think I was a millionaire, because they would see me at a circus in the daytime and they would see me at a circus at night, and they didn't know I had a job. And I would tell them that if they ever got a Ritz cracker box that was printed upside down they would know I had been at the circus the day before and just got back in time to go to work at midnight."

As we talked, Henry and I moved back and forth between just inside and just outside the back door of the tent, depending on how interested he was in whatever happened to be going on inside. One of the acts he was interested in was Angela's. She does a number of impressive stunts on a trapeze that hangs about halfway between the top of the tent and the floor of the ring. She climbs to the trapeze hand over hand, with her legs held rigidly at a right angle to her body, on a thick rope whose bottom end is held by Billy. She swings the trapeze so powerfully that she occasionally grazes the roof of the tent with either her head or her feet; and she winds in and out of the ropes, swings from her ankles, and does any number of frightening routines just above the audience's eye level. When she finishes, she swings down to the ring, and Billy kisses her hand.

While we watched, Henry held a large box of pencil-size pretzels, and he held it out to anyone who came within arm's reach. Henry almost always has several hundred pretzels with him, and he is known in circus back yards as the pretzel man. In the old days, he told me, he would travel with a movie projector as well, and he would set it up outside the tent and show movies to the children of performers while the show was going on. He still takes his projector to schools, nursing homes, and senior centers, and shows home movies of his favorite circuses. When he visits the Vidbel circus, he sometimes spends the night on the couch in Billy and Angela's trailer, but usually he drives home as soon as the last show is over, and sets off for another show the following day.

A second circus buff, Charlie Harrison, visited the Vidbels the following night, in Franklinville, New Jersey. Charlie is also single, is also retired, and is also in his sixties. He is very, very thin, and his hair is wispy and white. He has small, delicate-looking hands, and long fingers with long nails. "I met the Wallendas," he told me shortly after Billy introduced me to him. "You know the year so many of them died? I met them before that. And the little one, who was paralyzed."



Like Henry Bush, Charlie Harrison is interested mainly in the back yard. For both men, the circus is an obsession and a kind of family. Either man can show up on any circus lot in the Northeast and be certain of finding old friends. Henry enjoys taking performers out to dinner after shows. Charlie hasn't missed a new Ringling circus in more than fifty years. Both men help out at the ticket window or the concession stand when a show is shorthanded, and both men have found circus life to be an antidote to the kind of loneliness that makes living in a trailer and working in a tent seem hardly like loneliness at all.

IN the old days, circuses travelled by rail. The old Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey tent circus moved on eighty train cars. Fourteen cars were needed just to transport the seats. There were cars for the dogs, the elephants, the bears, the chimpanzees, the tigers, the rhinoceroses, the baboons, the jaguars, the monkeys, the lions, the orangutans, the hippopotamuses, the leopards, the giraffes, and the gorillas. Twenty-four cars were needed to carry the show's personnel. The Vidbel circus, in contrast, moves in three trucks, a handful of animal trailers, and a small convoy of house trailers. The Vidbels' tent is not much bigger than the tents the old Ringling show used for stabling its horses.

You could never tell by talking to Billy Martin that tent circuses have come down in the world since 1956, the last year the Ringling show performed under canvas. One day, I asked him whether circus life had lived up to his youthful expectations. "Oh, yes," he said. "In fact, it's even better. This is really just about perfect." And he truly meant it. During my time with the Vidbels, I don't think I ever saw him without a smile on his face. Even on the gloomy day when it rained hard through both performances, he looked chipper and enthusiastic. "Now you can see why a tent circus is called a mud show," he told me, taking genuine pleasure in this unexpected opportunity to teach me some more circus terminology.

On my last day with the Vidbels, I dropped by Billy and Angela's house, which, like my camper, was predominantly brown. In the forward end was a somewhat ragged-looking couch, on which one of the Martins' two dogs was sleeping. Mike Snyder, the clown, would be sleeping on the couch that night. (Mike usually stayed in the musician's trailer, but the musician's brother was visiting.) Henry Bush had slept on the couch the night before, and Billy's four-year-old son by a previous marriage, whose name is Travis, had slept on it two nights before that. Travis spends most of every summer and parts of the rest of the year with Billy; he was one of the little boys I had seen playing with a dump truck in the pasture on Martha's Vineyard. Travis has a little red tailcoat just like the one Billy's mother made for him when he was a little boy. During performances, he will sometimes stand near the bandstand and mimic his father's gestures in the ring.

"You should see this place in the wintertime," Angela said as I looked around the trailer. "Billy runs the indoor show from in here, and we have boxes full of tickets and programs and posters all over the place. Last year, we also had a family of five living with us for two months. There were two over there, three over there. The parents were performers in the show, and they were from Mexico, and they had had an accident with their truck and trailer, so they stayed with us until all the insurance got straightened out. They had a newborn baby and two other kids, but they were really nice, and we all fitted, and it was only two months."

Angela put on some coffee, and the three of us sat in the crowded space where the family of five had lived.

"You know what one of the hardest things about circus life is?" Billy said to me. "Haircuts. Honest. It's hard to get a good haircut, because every time you go you're at the mercy of an unknown barber. Mail is also hard. It has to be forwarded to the post office in care of general delivery, and you go in and show them your driver's license. You miss mail all the time. Usually, it's a bill, and you have to call and see how much it is. And the phone is hard, too. I book the entire winter show on pay phones between performances, and the phone bills run over a thousand dollars a month."

"Being sick is hard," Angela said.

"It certainly is," Billy said. "I had my appendix taken out a year and a half ago, during the winter show, and I was in the hospital for five days. That was six thousand dollars. Hard to believe."

"And I fell last year," Angela said.

"We thought for a minute she was gone."

"All I ended up with was a fractured heel, though. It happened in a gymnasium. When we play in schools, we wrap the cables around the beams in the ceilings and hang the trap from that, and it was just kind of a freak thing. I was swinging, and I dropped down to my ankles, and one whole side of the rig came loose and I landed on my shoulder. I was swinging back when it happened, and it just kind of flung me off. I was lucky that I landed on the floor instead of in the audience, and I was also lucky that I landed on my shoulder instead of on my neck."

After the accident, Angela was rushed to the hospital in an ambulance, and she spent the next five weeks with her foot in a cast. I asked her whether the show had gone on without her that day.

"Oh, it went on that minute," she said. "As they were wheeling me out, I could see the guy who came on after me doing a one-armed handstand."

"You hear people say, 'The show must go on,' " Billy said. "That's not quite right. What happens is that the show *does* go on. With or without you."

"He did come to visit me at intermission, though."

I looked around the trailer and tried without success to imagine sharing it with a family of five.

"Living like this must be tough when you're in a bad mood," I said. "If you two have a fight in here, there's no place for either of you to hide."

"It's a long trailer," Angela said.

"I wouldn't want to live any other way," Billy said. "We have everything we really need. When we aren't on the road, we back the trailer in next to my mother's house, in Olean. Someday, we'll build a house of our own. The winter show is just starting to take hold, and maybe in another ten years, another five years, or whatever. Who knows? There's no security in show business—none at all—but there isn't much security in anything nowadays, is there?"

I asked Billy if he ever worried that he was part of a dying breed.

"Oh, no, never," he said. "You know, people have an idea that circuses are disappearing, but they're not. The number of circuses is growing. When Ringling moved indoors, it wasn't because people didn't want to see the show anymore. It was just that the show was too big to move. But a little show like this one can still get around, and there are new shows coming out every year. Probably three out of five won't make it, but, still, there's a need for a show this size. We can play in larger cities or smaller cities, either one. It's just the right size, I think, and the one-ring format is great. It's the perfect size, too. And the show just gets more exciting every year, with all the different changes that are taking place, like the computer music now. That's a brand-new breakthrough."

"Do you ever get depressed when the crowd is small, the way it was the other day?"

"You know what?" he said. "I trouped with an under-canvas circus—oh, about four or five years ago—and Tiny Tim was on the show, as a singer. You remember hearing that Tiny Tim had joined the circus? Well, he did, and I was the ringmaster on that show. One Friday night, we were playing before a pretty small crowd—the competition was a football game, I think—and he said, 'How does it look, Mr. Martin?' And I said, 'Well, Tiny, we've seen better.' And he said, 'Whether it's two or two thousand, you just go out and do the show. And if they don't want to listen I'll sing it for the spirits, I'll sing it for Al Jolson and Kate Smith.' And, boy, that just gave me a good little thing to go by, you know? I think that's the common denominator of all the people here. You ask anybody here if they would trade it for anything, and they wouldn't."

Mike Snyder came into the trailer, said hello, and went back to the donnicker to shave before putting on his clown makeup. I asked Billy if the grind of daily performing ever got to him.

"No, no, no," he said. "A show like this isn't a grind. We have two-day stands and three-day stands, and we even have a day off every now and then. It's really very pleasant."

"What do you do when you do have a day off?" I asked.

Billy smiled and looked slightly embarrassed. "Well," he said, "to tell you the truth, what I'll usually do is go and see a circus."

—DAVID OWEN

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THE NEW SOUTH

[*From the Miami Herald*]

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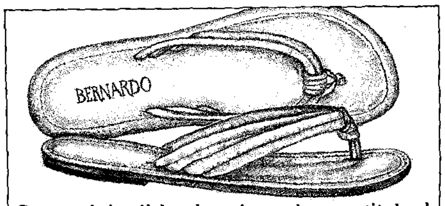

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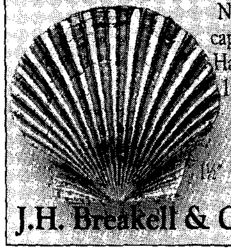

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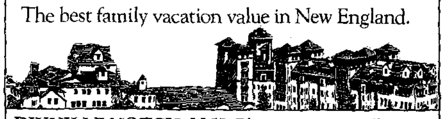

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

April 9

JOYLESSLY, the Democratic Party is beginning to coalesce around its now undisputed front-runner. Democrats' doubts that Bill Clinton can surmount his own problems sufficiently to defeat George Bush are giving way to the reality that there is no other viable candidate in the field and, in the light of Clinton's victories in New York, Wisconsin, Kansas, and Minnesota on Tuesday, no strong enough rationale for someone else's entering the race. (There is also some grudging admiration for the grit that Clinton has shown.) Dreams of a "brokered Convention" die hard, in part because usually some elements of the Party are loath to back a front-runner—in this case, some feel, with more reason—and because a brokered Convention would provide the last stronghold for those who want to exercise power or cause mischief, and also because the contemplation of a brokered Convention is so much fun.

Clinton's victory in New York was the crucial one; had he lost by as little as one point, numerous Party leaders were ready to pull the plug on him (assuming they could have). But the victory was less than a triumph, with Clinton getting forty-one per cent, Paul Tsongas (who had "suspended" his campaign and barely showed up in New York) coming in second, with an astonishing twenty-nine per cent, and Jerry Brown coming in a humiliating third, with twenty-six per cent. There were of course several ominous signs: the voter turnout in New York being down by more than five hundred thousand from 1988; the fact that more than half the voters preferred someone else to Clinton, and that sixty-six per cent of those polled expressed dissatisfaction with the choices they were offered—a number that has been rising as the primaries proceed. (A large portion of the Tsongas vote was a protest against being presented with the choice of Clinton or Brown.) Moreover, almost half the voters said that Clinton lacked the honesty and integrity to be President.

The big question going into the New York primary was whether Brown's upset victory over Clinton in Connecticut, on March 24th (albeit by one per cent), two weeks before New York, was a fluke or the beginning of a trend away from Clinton. Clinton advisers had various explanations of why Clinton lost Connecticut, but none of them suggested what might have been another reason: that Clinton isn't wearing well. He may also be the victim of bad timing. He is a very skilled politician in what may be the age of anti-politics. What some see as his highly developed campaign skills come off to others as too smooth, and his perpetual smile (mouth slightly open) comes across to some as warmth and to others as the sign of a slick operator. In newspaper interviews voters have more than once described Clinton as another televangelist. Clinton did run into big problems in New York, but the biggest ones were self-induced, and only added to the legend of Slick Willie.

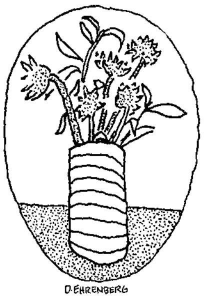
The Clinton people entered New York with deep apprehensions. It was as if they were going to a foreign country. They knew that this would be a primary unlike any they had undergone before, and they weren't sure of their footing amid the various ethnic groups (some with their own subdivisions) and the tabloids. Certain segments of the New York political/press community take great pride in mugging national candidates—and so-called front-runners are all the more tempting. The raucous atmosphere throws many candidates off stride—as it did Clinton, at least for a while. But it's part of the scene, a hurdle Presidential candidates have to overcome. As he had done in previous contests, Clinton complained publicly—almost whined—and then got down to the job.

As it happened, the tabloids didn't seem noticeably rougher than they had been four years ago (perhaps memories fade), and even the tensions between blacks and Jews—inadvertently stirred up by Jerry Brown when he made a big thing of his wanting Jesse Jackson to be his running mate—didn't seem as raw as they were four years ago. (Brown pays a price for making it up as he goes along.) But Clinton was stymied at first by his inability to be heard over the din of disruptive hecklers, blaring tabloids, and the general free-for-all that the New York primary turns into. A Clinton adviser likened it to a hazing. Clinton himself was becoming visibly agitated, and chewed out his staff on a few occasions (once into an open microphone, when he ought to know better). He was obviously exhausted, with puffs under his eyes and a throat that was perpetually hoarse. (An aide says that Clinton was getting three to four hours of sleep a night. Now he and his larynx have been ordered to rest.) His advisers tried to get him to refrain from responding to every question thrown at him by the press when he left an event, so as to keep him from stepping on his own story. (Once the Clinton campaign people thought he had righted himself in New York City, they got him the hell out of town—to upstate, to Wisconsin—for a while.)

GEVALT!
W. Steig

The poll data were rather grim for Clinton after Connecticut: whereas after th contests in Illinois and Michigan he had (in his own polls been ahead of Brown in New York by eighteen points, b the Thursday after the Connecticut vote he and Brown were dead even in New York. The Clinton camp was also worried that New York would be the locus of an "anybody but Clinton" movement, this being the normal time for a stop-the-front-runner effort. If Clinton wasn't stopped in New York, there would probably be no stopping him (with the now familiar caveat about something explosive coming along). In New York, a number of people were at least dipping their toes in a stop-Clinton movement. Some labor groups backed Brown not out of any thought that he could win but in the hope that they could be powers at a brokered Convention. Mario Cuomo played his usual elliptical role: he can't bring himself to run but has a hard time accepting anyone else's winning the nomination. In the early phase of the New York primary, the state Democratic chairman, John Marino, was saying publicly that his mother had misgivings about Clinton; this was taken to be the moral equivalent of Cuomo's mother's misgivings in past races. When Clinton called on Cuomo in Albany on the Saturday before the voting, Cuomo was warm in his praise of Clinton but stopped short of endorsing him. On "Meet the Press" the next day, Cuomo managed a few mentions of Clinton's recent problems, saying all the while that they didn't interest him. ("The heck with draft notices, girlfriends, floozies.") Jackson, never one to miss an opportunity, was doing what he could to minimize the black vote for Clinton—thus potentially establishing himself as a power at the Convention. And then, of course, Tsongas encouraged votes for himself by showing up a couple of times, condoning advertising by a local Draft Tsongas Committee, and saying on the Sunday before the vote that if he did well enough and Clinton did badly enough on Tuesday he might reënter the race. Tsongas was another in a long list of examples of how hard it is for candidates to give up. His receiving twenty per cent of the vote in Connecticut even though he had suspended his campaign, plus the evidence of New Yorkers' dissatisfaction with the two other Democratic choices, was enough to tempt Tsongas, despite the impracticalities of his reëntering. (He needed money; there were still limits on the constituency he could attract; and Clinton, whatever his troubles, was piling up delegates.) His announcement today that he wouldn't reënter the race seemed the only sensible course.

Worried about the polls and desperate to get its candidate through to the public, the Clinton camp, after a couple of days of internal debate, decided on the strategy of using the omnipresent media—of having Clinton appear with Brown in as many debates as possible, even at the risk of giving Brown more publicity and more opportunities to throw bombs at Clinton. The debates were seen as one of the few ways to set the agenda for the press coverage. The calculation also was that the various television outlets—the very existence of so many channels and programs—gave Clinton an opportunity to conduct what some of his staff called an electronic New Hampshire: in New Hampshire, one could get known by conducting "retail politics," reaching a high percentage of the individual voters in the small state; in New York City, Clinton would try the same thing over the airwaves. (Most cities don't offer such an opportunity.)



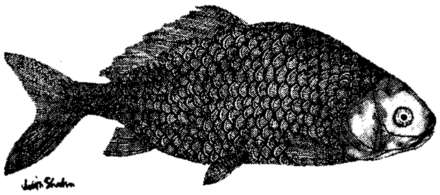
For the Clinton camp, debating Brown raised two other possibilities: Clinton could go after Brown's proposal for a flat tax, and Brown, given so much exposure, might come across as a nut. Brown didn't coöperate: he was making an obvious effort to smile more, and he showed that he could discuss seriously—or apparently seriously—a wide number of subjects. Still, New Yorkers didn't find him sufficiently plausible. The two candidates discussed urban policy a bit, but less than might have been expected, in part because the mega-issue of the economy overshadows urban issues in this election; in part because, for the first time, most of the votes are in the suburbs; and in part because the candidates disagreed little on this subject. Clinton has a ten-page, thirty-four-point plan for the cities, in which he stresses his themes of empowerment and responsibility (not just handouts) but notes that the most important goal is economic recovery. He did the predictable amount of pandering to the various interest groups in New York that command a Democratic candidate's time and attention. At first, the interest groups were on his schedule; then—in an effort to show he would be different—they were wiped away; and then, one by one, they made it back onto his schedule. Brown held the high ground on the subject of the need for reform of the political system (even if he didn't offer many specific ideas), probably the hottest political topic of these times—as Clinton acknowledged. (Clinton also praised Brown's inspiration of the fund-raising 800 number as a form of empowerment.)

Right after Connecticut, Clinton went like a battering ram against what he referred to as "Jerry's tax": Clinton's advisers had found that a lot of people actually liked the sound of a "flat tax." Just as he had done with Tsongas, Clinton through a series of attacks turned Brown's central economic message into a liability. Clinton's people were ecstatic when Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan made a big point of saying that Brown's plan threatened Social Security. (Clinton's staff, by its own admission, had failed to spot this.) Brown was eventually driven to say that he would be willing to make changes in his plan. But, despite these tactical victories, Clinton was responding to Brown's agenda rather than setting his own or, as had been the plan after Illinois and Michigan, concentrating his fire on President Bush. And he wasn't getting across a message of his own.

Some of Clinton's aides concede that his message needs sharpening. They say the heat of the battle has prevented it, but that isn't a terribly strong reason. A more relevant one is that Clinton, who thinks in terms of complexities, and has a lot of material in his head that he wants to get out, resists simplification. To Clinton, a clear message is limiting. He talks about the need for a national economic strategy that goes beyond ending the recession, and emphasizes education and training; he talks about the need to end our racial divisions. (This is designed to, among other things, appeal to liberals.) He has a list of topics that come under the category of opportunity and responsibility: limits on the deductibility of top corporate salaries; college loans to be repaid in either money or national service; welfare reform. Also, to some extent, Clinton's message goes against the grain right now; his expansive view of government's role has to overcome a lot of skepticism. A Clinton adviser said to me recently, "Hammering the opposition is the easy part. The harder part is to get people to believe in government again." And Clinton's own actions—his seeming willingness to play loose with the truth—only serve to feed that skepticism, and undermine his cause. To believe in government again, people have to be able to believe in the person who says that he will make the government work and be more responsive. Clinton's advisers are by and large incensed that so many questions have been raised about Clinton's "character" when substantively he offers such promise as a knowledgeable, progressive leader. What they fail to see is that in many people's minds these are not unrelated subjects.

The Clinton campaign's goal in New York was to see how long it could go without an untoward story. It seldom went for more than two days. Even when Clinton gave his much ballyhooed foreign-policy speech—with Bush contributing to the buildup by rushing to announce a program of aid to Russia just before Clinton was to speak—he didn't get a clean shot. Clinton's speech had several purposes: to build on his slim credentials in foreign policy; to try to establish the idea that this year's election is a big one, and that primary voters should take seriously the decision about whom to put up against Bush; to appeal to the élites, which, the Clinton campaign figured, could make a difference in New York; to fill a news cycle with material of the campaign's own choosing. There is a sort of classic progression that discussion of foreign policy goes through. As George Stephanopoulos, Clinton's deputy campaign manager, put it, such a speech "reaches the pundits who write the columns that are read by the diplomats and the experts who talk to each other and to the reporters who write the articles that are read by the people and by the TV producers who put stories on the air that are seen by more of the people." Clinton's speech, which espoused active internationalism but largely stayed within conventional wisdom and also sought to undercut Bush's foreign-policy credentials, went through just such a progression, and resulted in numerous favorable articles and extensive coverage—especially for a serious speech. Unfortunately, the same news cycle contained the story of Clinton's appearance that same day on "Donahue," during which Phil Donahue grilled Clinton about his relationship with Gennifer Flowers and other controversial matters. Some Clinton campaign aides maintained afterward that this was just fine, a "triumph," because Clinton had handled the situation well and because some members of Donahue's studio audience turned on their host for dwelling on this topic. Perhaps, but the main point was that the subject was in the air, and Clinton couldn't get away from it.

THE Clinton campaign people have become masters of the "spin"—suggesting to the press a positive interpretation of whatever potentially dangerous news story has arisen. By now, it has become reflexive. In New York, they were required to go into their "spin mode" several times. A Clinton aide says, "It's like being in a bunker, with shells exploding around you all the time." First, there was the carryover effect of Clinton's having played golf, during his two-day respite in Arkansas after Illinois and Michigan, at an all-white club. To their surprise, the Clinton people found, through focus-group interviews, that the event was troubling white liberals in New York. Various explanations have been offered for Clinton's gaffe. Clinton said, "It was the only place we had time to play," and added, "I should not have done it." But the incident remains inexplicable for a politician who has read the newspapers in the last few years. The real explanation for this and certain other problems that have arisen is that what went over all right in Arkansas doesn't necessarily translate well on the national scene. This also goes for the stories that suggest coziness with leading businessmen in the state, or little deals to help a friend or the Clintons themselves. My own sense is that the Clintons, for all their experience on the national scene (he through work in the National Governors' Association and the Democratic Leadership Council, and she through the Children's Defense Fund and other causes), may need a higher sensitivity to the land mines on the road to big-time public life, but that they didn't use public office to enrich themselves.



The Clintons tend to think that what has worked for them in the past will work in a Presidential campaign—and that's where they can get int trouble. An adviser says that the campaign "needs a strong center—operationally and strategically." The candidate and his wife have tried to play that role, and, while they know a lot about national politics, it isn't enough—especially when they're also going through a brutal and exhausting campaign. Clinton's evasive replies on whether he had smoked marijuana had worked in the past, but predictably blew up in his face in the course of his Presidential campaign. His ultimate confession, in New York, that he had tried marijuana while in England on a Rhodes scholarship wasn't the problem; the problem was that he was shown to have been cute on the subject until then. His excuse was that he hadn't been asked the question directly before (some of his advisers even blamed the press, for not having asked the right question earlier), but wisdom would have got the matter out and over with long ago. And he remained almost fatally cute. His "I didn't inhale" quickly became a national joke. On the final weekend before the voting, there was the business of the induction letter that Clinton confirmed he had received while in England, though he had earlier denied being called up. His aides spun like mad on that one, sometimes telling different stories. Clinton's damaging inclination to evade the truth is puzzling—it seems to be of a piece with other aspects of his personality, in which he appears to think that he doesn't have to play by the rules and that, as he often says, the more people see him, the more they will like him. Clinton, for all his sophistication lacks a certain maturity.

And then there was the matter o Hillary Clinton's being quoted in *Vanit Fair* as complaining that while th press was all over her husband for h alleged affairs, it hadn't exposed a affair that Bush was long rumored have had. Some Clinton people and other Democrats had been pushing for publicity about Bush's rumored affair, for which the press had not been able to obtain corroboration (after all, Gennifer Flowers gave a paid-for interview and held a press conference), and there was some suspicion that Hillary Clinton was deliberately trying to get the subject out there. But she is the second-to-last person who should raise it (her husband being the last). So the harried Clinton staff spun on the Hillary story, too. The truth is that Hillary Clinton has become something of a problem for her husband's campaign. This is a highly delicate subject, of course, but, for all the admiration she attracts as a smart, articulate woman who has built her own career, she comes off to many people as highly ambitious, as desiring her husband's victory every bit as badly as he does (and that's very badly), for her own purposes. Clinton himself contributed to the problem by suggesting that his wife would get a high-level job in his Administration. Clinton's advisers thought this was a big mistake, since it underlined Hillary's role as a separate power, and later Clinton tried another tack, by saying that his wife wouldn't have an official job but would work on commissions and on specific problems, as she had in Arkansas. No one who knows the Clintons doubts that she would be a strong influence on her husband if he's elected—a good one, most of their friends say. Hillary Clinton is paying the price for being a transitional figure—a Presidential candidate's wife who has her own professional identity and a strong mind and a real bent toward policy, particularly concerning children. (The Bush campaign plans to paint her as an ideologue—and has already begun to do so.) A problem for the campaign is that, for all her intelligence, Hillary Clinton—pressured as never before, in a brighter spotlight than ever—makes some unfortunate remarks. She has been running like a candidate, and all candidates make mistakes.

In fact, Clinton campaign aides talk quite bluntly about the necessity to adjust the Clintons' image, and they acknowledge that the job won't be easy—and that there is little time. They wonder how they can convince the public that a candidate is honest—as opposed to, say, not a wimp (Bush, 1988). They talk of the need to "reintroduce" the Clintons to the electorate—probably beginning with Bill, on substantive issues (leaving Hillary in the background for a while). There will be a lot of memos and discussions about this, they say. Right now, the candidate and his campaign entourage are exhausted. One top adviser said just before the voting in New York, "He needs time off. We're not thinking. This process is such a grind." But if Clinton wants to lead, and to govern, he will have to become someone more people want to follow.

THE Clintons' troubles have been a boon to the Bush campaign, which is having its own problems. Even though Patrick Buchanan has essentially faded from view, there is still a protest vote against Bush of about a third of the voters in certain states. There are increasing complaints about "gridlock" at the White House, under the relatively new chief of staff, Sam Skinner, who has added layers to the policymaking process, with the result that it is very difficult to get decisions made. The multilayered White House and the multiheaded campaign team make for a sluggish Administration and campaign. Bush's campaigning, such as it is, has been uninspired and uninteresting—and he still has difficulty in sustaining a theme. A friend of Bush's says, "The campaign doesn't have any ideas. The White House doesn't have any ideas. Bush doesn't have any ideas." Both candidates will insist that they are for change, but this is an argument that is hard for an incumbent President (and former Vice-President) to make, so Bush will try to portray Clinton as representing risky change. Whether that charge sticks is largely up to Clinton.

—ELIZABETH DREW

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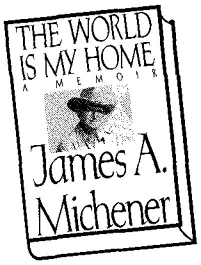

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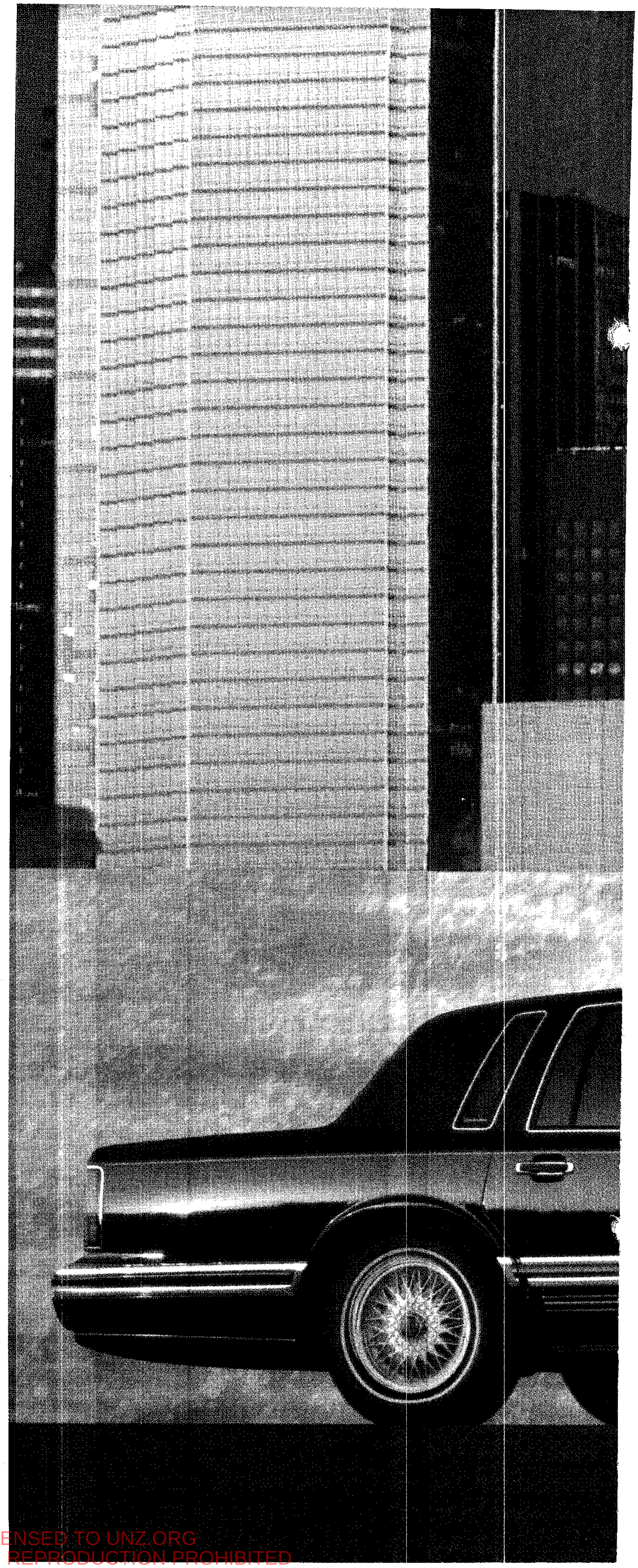

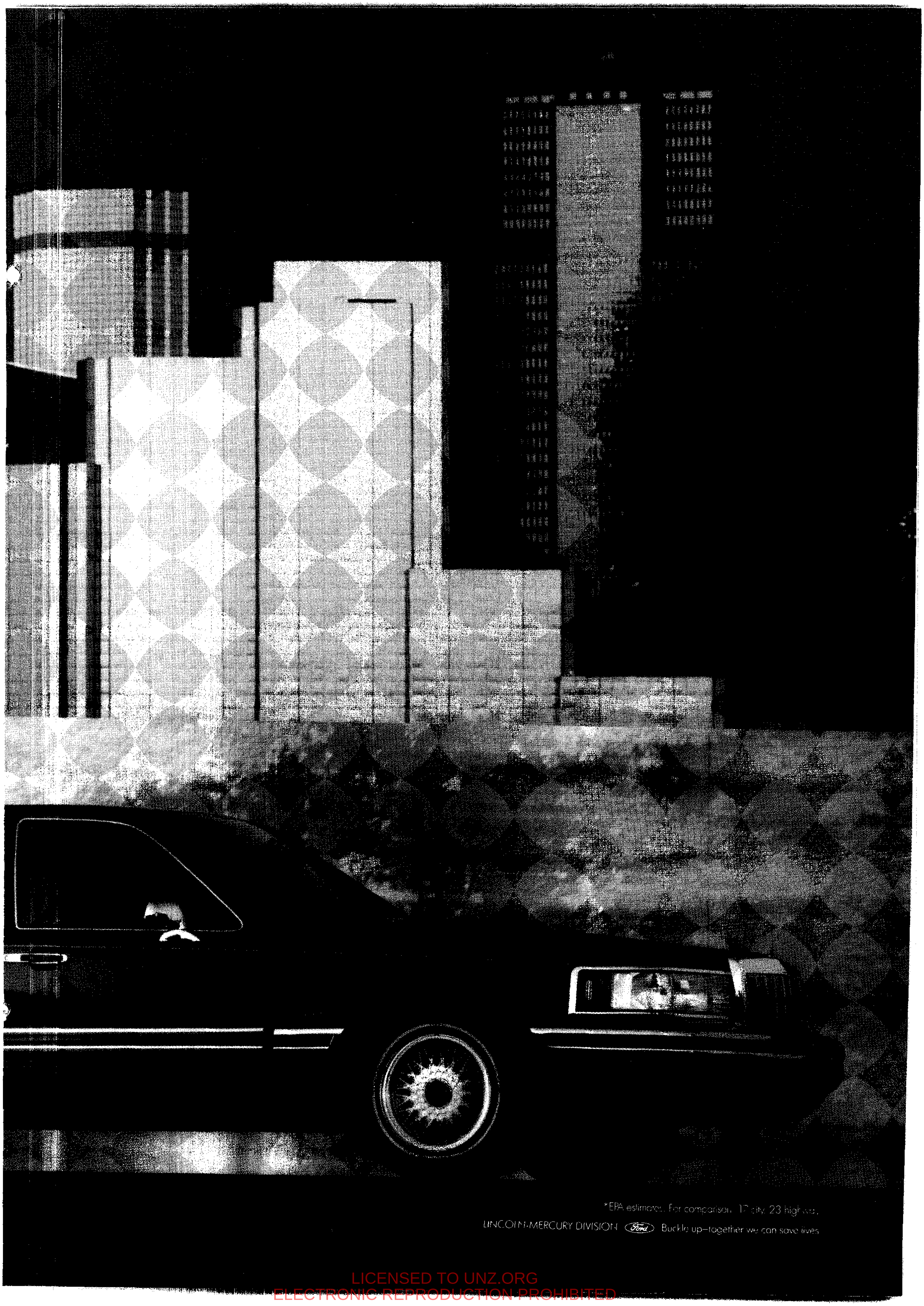

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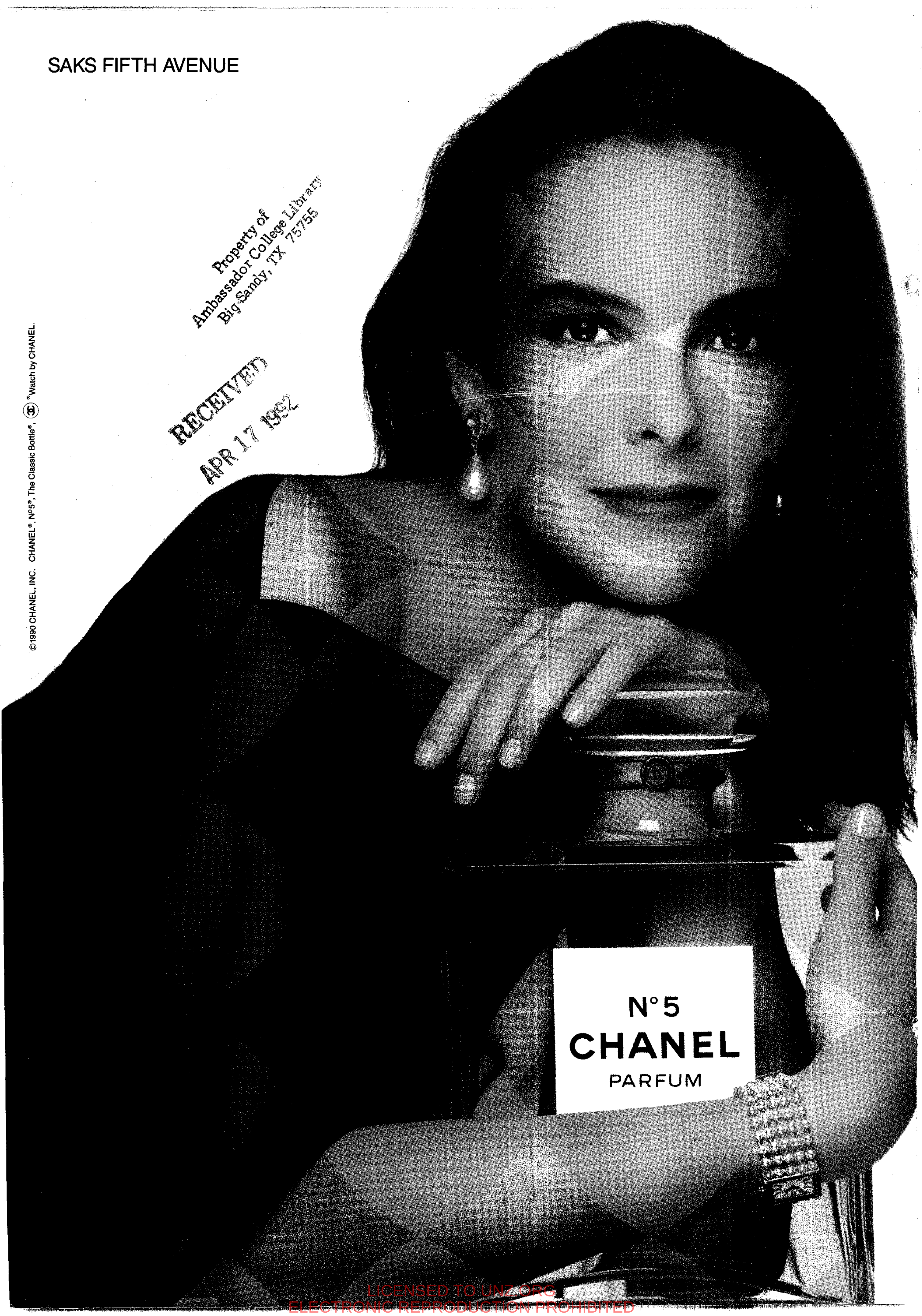

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